

WALTHER.45



MORE GUN REVIEWS

RUGER LCR 9MM S&W MODEL 69 WILSON/BERETTA 92 CHRISTENSEN 1911 RUGER'S LATEST HANDLES BOTH .45 ACP AND COLT

GLOCK G43
THE SUBCOMPACT 9MM
YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

KIMBER MICRO .380 ACP PISTOLS.

LIGHT. COMPACT. POWERFUL.

MICRO COP





Weighing in at 13.4 oz., all Micro pistols feature a thumb safety, smooth 7 lb. single action trigger and all are Lasergrip compatible.



The Micro CDP offers Kimber 3-dot tritium night sights, Carry Melt™ treatment on frame and slide, and front strap checkering.



The Micro Raptor Stainless incorporates all of the popular Raptor features such as slide scaling, front strap scale serrations, tritium night sights, ambidextrous safety and zebrawood grips.



MADE IN AMERICA

WHAT ALL GUNS SHOULD BETM



The Semi-Auto with the FULLY AUTOMATIC Warranty.

Available in a variety of colors and finishes.
Capacity: 10+1 • 9mm
MSRP: \$315 (CPX-2)
Includes two mags.

If you ever need help with your SCCY, our warranty will take care of you. Fully and automatically—at no charge. Breakage or damage? We'll repair it automatically. Loss or theft? We'll *replace* it automatically.

Even more amazing: our exclusive Perpetual Warranty never runs out. With all that in mind, your choice for a sub-compact 9mm should be automatic: *SCCY*.



The NEW American gun company founded on the *radical* idea that the customer comes first.

1800 CONCEPT COURT, DAYTONA BEACH, FL 32114 866.729.7599 | WWW.SCCY.COM

WHANDGUNS CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016 | VOLUME 29, NUMBER 6 | PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY | www.handguns.com

FEATURES

32 BIG BROTHER

By JAMES TARR

Walther is known for a lot of things, but selling a .45 ACP pistol isn't one of them. Now that's changed with the new PPQ M2.

38 DUAL THREAT

By PATRICK SWEENEY

The newest Redhawk double-action revolver provides a ton of flexibility thanks to the fact it chambers both .45 ACP and .45 Colt.

46 A GLOCK THAT ROCKS

By JAMES TARR

In the new G43, Glock fans finally get the gun they've been clamoring for: a single-stack (or nearly so) 9mm subcompact.

52 A REAL STEEL

By JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

Christensen Arms, known for rifles and titanium-framed 1911s, is now offering steel-frame pistols for those whose tastes run to the high end.

58 A TACTICAL 92

By JAMES TARR

Wilson Combat and Beretta team up to make a Model 92 that takes the design to a whole new level.

32 RECTANAL (9) 38



DEPARTMENTS

4 LETTERS

10 SPEEDLOADS

- Previewing the 2016 Olympics
- 9mm pinfire double-barrel
- Gunsite drill

16 DEFENSIVE TACTICS

WALT RAUCH

The best way to win a confrontation is to avoid it.

20 AMMO SHELF

PATRICK SWEENEY
Pair your suppressed pistol
with subsonic ammo.

22 ON PATROL

DAVE SPAULDING Why ankle carry can be a legit option for officers.

26 ESSENTIALS

JAMES TARR

Holster size plays a big role in choosing the right rig.

30 GUNS & GEAR

72 GUN SENSE

RICHARD NANCE Low-light training is something you simply can't neglect.

FIRING LINE REPORTS

66 RUGER LCR 9MM

By JAMES TARR

70 SMITH & WESSON MODEL 69

By BRAD FITZPATRICK



HANDGUNS LETTERS



Terrific 10

Great article on the 10mm (August/ September). Before I went overseas to work, I reloaded and shot 10mm and .40 S&W on a regular basis. I pretty much use light bullets, 155-grainers for both 10mm and .40 using Accurate Arms No. 7 powder. Both guns are used for IPSC competitions, when I can get to them, or just practicing at the range, and both guns have compensators on them. They are fun calibers, and I just love them.

> Marc Liebhold LIVERMORE, CA

I am a 10mm fan, so "The Unsung 10" article by Patrick Sweeney was of particular interest to me. However, there is one point that I would like to mention in order to give appropriate credit for the development of the .40 S&W. Prior to the famous FBI Miami shootout in 1986, Paul Liebenberg of Pachmayr/Pistol Dynamics fame had shortened the Norma 10mm cartridge 0.1 inch and named it the Centimeter. The new cartridge was

intended as an option to replace the .38 Super in the IPSC major caliber classification without the Super's high pressures. There may have been a point where the FBI realized the 10mm Norma could be shortened, but Mr. Liebenberg was way ahead of the game.

> JIM SWANSON LOS LUNAS, NM

Common Sense

Congratulations on a couple of pretty good articles in your October/November issue. Patrick Sweeney did a great job explaining not only the real reason why the FBI changed to 9mm, but also the real difference between the 9mm, the .40 and the .45 ACP. There is so much nonsense floating around about magic bullets and how new techniques and inventions have finally broken the laws of physics, and it's good to see some common sense in black and white.

And Walt Rauch's article "Getting Started" is indeed common sense on selecting a first concealment gun. As a police firearms instructor, my advice on buying a first gun was to get something you would be both confident and comfortable with. Walt's information was spoton. This was the best issue you have put out, and I've been reading your magazine for a long time.

> MIKE KOLENDO PALM COAST, FL

Decockers and Disassembly

I just got around to reading my October/November issue. I have

been hearing a lot about the TP9 and was eager to read your review. The author describes field-stripping the firearm, writing that you should pull the trigger to disassemble. The entire purpose of having a decocker on the TP9 is so one does not need to pull the trigger to field strip the TP9. The owners manual says to press the decocker then pull the takedown lever. Then the slide can be removed from the frame. Pressing the decocker relieves the spring tension without needing to press the trigger. It is a much safer way and another feather in the cap of the TP9.

Brett Hoover

DULUTH, MN

Thanks for the note, Mr. Hoover. Also, as a few other readers pointed out, the TP9 has been replaced by the TP9SA.

Real-World Drills

A quick thought on the handgun drills in your mag. These all seem to be geared around full-size sidearms with an OWB holster uncovered and with younger shooters in mind. How about some for us oldsters using subcompact weapons with IWB holsters and a covering garment—possibly with additional, more realistic times. With the proliferation of concealed carry, many of us would fall into that category.

> RON BECKEMAN IMPERIAL, MO

Remington Update

I wonder if you have any information on when we can expect Remington to send us the new R51 to replace the one they recalled. We were told our guns would be replaced with a newly manufactured gun. I sent mine in over a year ago. I recently called Remington and was told that replacements were delayed due to manufacturing being moved to a new factory. I now

CONTACT US

For letters to the editor or feedback on our content, email us at Handguns@OutdoorSG.com or write to us at Handguns, P.O. Box 13786, Torrance, CA 90503. Please include your town and state of residence. Letters to the editor may be edited for brevity and clarity.

ADDRESS CHANGE OR QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR SUBSCRIPTION? Please email Handguns@ EmailCustomerService.com, call us toll-free at 800-800-4486 or write to Handguns, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. If changing address, please send both old and new addresses. see that the R51 is being advertised again. When can we expect to get our replacement guns?

JEFFREY BURKART
NEW PHILADELPHIA, OH

Mr. Burkart: We contacted Remington, and a company spokeswoman said there's no estimate on when the R51 replacements will be ready. She did pass along this statement: "If you do not wish to wait for your new R51 pistol, we are pleased to continue to offer you your choice

of a full refund for the cost of the R51 pistol or a new R1 1911, Model 96323, as a replacement product."

Wrong Glock

I was a little confused about the Glock G35 MOS reviewed in last issue's "Firing Line." Based on the picture, I expected a composite article about a group of guns using the MOS platform. However, you only talked about the G35. The reason for my confusion was that

the picture clearly shows a 9mm model G34.

RICHARD CONNOR

FRANKSTON, TX

Mr. Connor: Good eye. The author provided several nearly identical photos, and I picked the one with the best angle and lighting—never thinking to zoom in and check the slide markings because I assumed all the images were of the G35. Glock models look alike, so I should have paid closer attention.—JSR

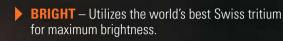


THE WORLD'S BEST HANDGUN SIGHTS



TRITIUM FIBER-OPTIC XTREME TECHNOLOGY

BRIGHT, DAY/NIGHT AND VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE



- **DAY/NIGHT** Unmatched visibility in all shooting conditions 24/7; visible in daylight, low-light or no light.
- VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE Hermetically sealed. Impervious to oils, chemicals, solvents and ultra-sonic cleaners.



SCAN TO VIEW TFX VIDEO

ONLY BY

WHEN BRIGHTNESS COUNTS

₩WW.TRUGLO.COM



OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN

R UP

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Jeff Paro

EVP, GROUP PUBLISHER, HUNTING & SHOOTING Mike Carney

SENIOR VP, TV OPERATIONS
GROUP PUBLISHER, FISHING
Stave Hoffman

VP, FINANCE & OPERATIONS

VP, STRATEGIC SALES & MARKETING

Ted Gramkow

VP, CONSUMER MARKETING
Peter Watt

VP, MANUFACTURING

Deb Daniels

VP, CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Todd Smith

DIRECTOR, MARKETING & SALES DEVELOPMENT John White

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION

Connie Mendoza

DIRECTOR, PUBLISHING TECHNOLOGY
Kyle Morgan

OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN DIGITAL

VP, DIGITAL SALES

David Grant

DIRECTOR, DIGITAL DEVELOPMENTBerry Blanton

DIRECTOR, DIGITAL AD OPS

Reggie Hudson

MANAGER, DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Brock Norman

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, FISHING

Jeff Simpson

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, HUNTING/SHOOTING

Randy Hynes

FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING DIGITAL EDITIONS, PLEASE CONTACT DIGITALSUPPORT@OUTDOORSG.COM

MEDIA

OUTDOORSG.COM

FISHING

BASSFAN.COM FLORIDASPORTSMAN.COM FLYFISHERMAN.COM GAMEANDFISHMAG.COM IN-FISHERMAN.COM

HUNTING

BOWHUNTER.COM BOWHUNTINGMAG.COM GUNDOGMAG.COM PETERSENSHUNTING.COM NORTHAMERICANWHITETAIL.COM WILDFOWLMAG.COM

SHOOTING

GUNSANDAMMO.COM HANDGUNS.COM RIFLESHOOTERMAG.COM SHOOTINGTIMES.COM SHOTGUNNEWS.COM

TELEVISION

OUTDOORCHANNEL.COM THESPORTSMANCHANNEL.COM WORLDFISHINGNETWORK.COM

COPYRIGHT 2015 BY OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP, INC. HANDGUNS $^{\tiny (B)}$ IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Publisher and authors make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of the information contained in this publication. Any reliance or use of the information is solely at your own risk, and the authors and Publisher disclaim any and all liability relating thereto. Any prices given in this issue were the suggested prices at the press time and are subject to change.

Some advertisements in this magazine may concern products that are not legally for sale to California residents or residents in other jurisdictions.

EXAMPLE 1

AN OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP PUBLICATION
WWW.HANDGUNS.COM

PUBLISHER Chris AGNES

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF ART DIRECTOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER GROUP ART DIRECTOR CHIEF COPY EDITOR J. Scott RUPP
Heather FERRO
Michael ANSCHUETZ
David KLECKNER
Michael BRECKLIN

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Brad FITZPATRICK, Rick HACKER, Richard NANCE, Walt RAUCH, Bob SHELL, Paul SCARLATA, Dave SPAULDING, Patrick SWEENEY, James TARR, Stan TRZONIEC, Joseph VON BENEDIKT

PRODUCTION MANAGER Kathryn MCGLOTHLEN

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
ALZIEGLER

ENDEMIC AD SALES

NATIONAL ENDEMIC SALES

Jim McCONVILLE (440) 791-7017

WESTERN REGION Hutch LOONEY (818) 990-9000

MIDWEST/SOUTHEAST REGION **Rob WALKER** (309) 679-5069

EAST COAST REGION
Pat BENTZEL (717) 695-8095

WESTERN REGION
Pat BARTEE (402) 463-4589

MIDWEST REGION

Michael GARRISON (309) 679-5054

CORPORATE AD SALES

EAST COAST STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGER

Kathy HUGHETT (646) 225-6559

MIDWEST & DETROIT STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGER **Kevin DONLEY** (248) 798-4458

WEST COAST STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGER Mark HERMANSON (714) 306-9900

DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING/NON-ENDEMIC
Anthony SMYTH (914) 693-8700

HANDGUNS (ISSN # 1068-2635), December 2015/January 2016, VOLUME 29 NUMBER 6. Published bimonthly by OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP, 1040 6th Ave., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10018-3703. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address change (Form 3579) to Handguns, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: 500 R. 46 East, Clifton, NJ 07011. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 41405030.

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

Should you wish to change your address, order new subscriptions, or report a problem with your current subscription, you can do so by writing Handguns, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539, or e-mail us at handguns@emailcustomerservice.com., or call TOLL FREE 1-800-800-4486.

BE AWARE THAT HANDGUNS ONLY ACCEPTS SUBSCRIPTION REQUESTS FROM AUTHORIZED AGENTS! WE MAY NOT HONOR REQUESTS FROM UNAUTHORIZED AGENTS, AND YOU THEREFORE MAY LOSE YOUR MONEY IF YOU BUY FROM AN UNAUTHORIZED AGENT. If you are offered a subscription to Handguns, please call 1-800-800-4486 to determine if the agent is authorized. For more information on subscription scams, please visit www.ftc.gov.

Subscription rate for one year is \$19.94 (U.S., APO, FPO, and U.S. possessions). Canada add \$13.00 (U.S. funds) per year, includes sales tax and GST. Foreign add \$15.00 (U.S. funds) per year.

Occasionally, our subscriber list is made available to reputable firms offering goods and services that we believe would be of interest to our readers. If you prefer to be excluded, please send your current address label and a note requesting to be excluded from these promotions to:

Outdoor Sportsman Group 1040 6th Ave., 12th Floor New York, NY 10018-3703 Attn: Privacy Coordinator

FOR REPRINTS: For Reprints/Eprints or Licensing/Permissions, please contact: Wright's Media -- TOLL FREE 1 (877) 652-5295.

BOOKS, DVD'S, & BACK ISSUES: TOLL FREE 1 (800) 260-6397 or visit our on-line store at www.imoutdoors.com/store.







Introducing the new ultra-compact XC1

The formidable XC1—designed to bring all-important white light to most compact handguns—boasts a wide MaxVision Beam engineered to maintain situational awareness, while its smooth pattern, with no hot spot, was optimized for the human eye. Its incomparable beam pattern, intuitive switching, and concealable size put it in a class all by itself. Never fight blind. Get your hands on the most anticipated pistol light of the year.



- 200-Lumen MaxVision Beam™
- Designed for railed compact handguns
- Weighs just 1.6 ounces
- Powered by one AAA battery

See video & learn more www.surefire.com/XC1









Airing on the Sportsman Channel Mondays @ 8 p.m. ET and Tuesdays @ 5 p.m. ET

WEEK OF OCTOBER 19TH / RUGER PRECISION RIFLE

The English are know for everything from their Royal Family to fox hunting on horseback to strawberries and cream at Wimbledon to its neighborhood pubs. But one element that is often overlooked is one of the simplest designed full autos ever—and one of the most reliable—the Class III Sterling. It served the troops well in World War II and our guys were quick to label it a classic, no matter the simplicity of design. Check out this report to understand why.

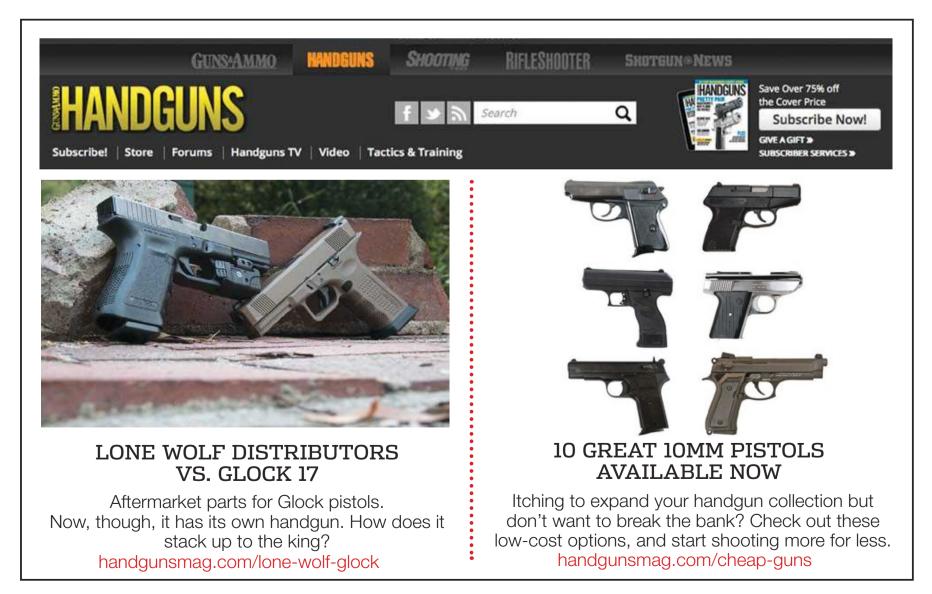
"Playing the wind" has frustrated shooters and hunters for decades, but Leupold believes this cutting edge technology will benefit riflemen unlike any other optic or reticle available. Craig Boddington, who has done more than his fair share of long range shooting and hunting across the globe, takes a hard look.

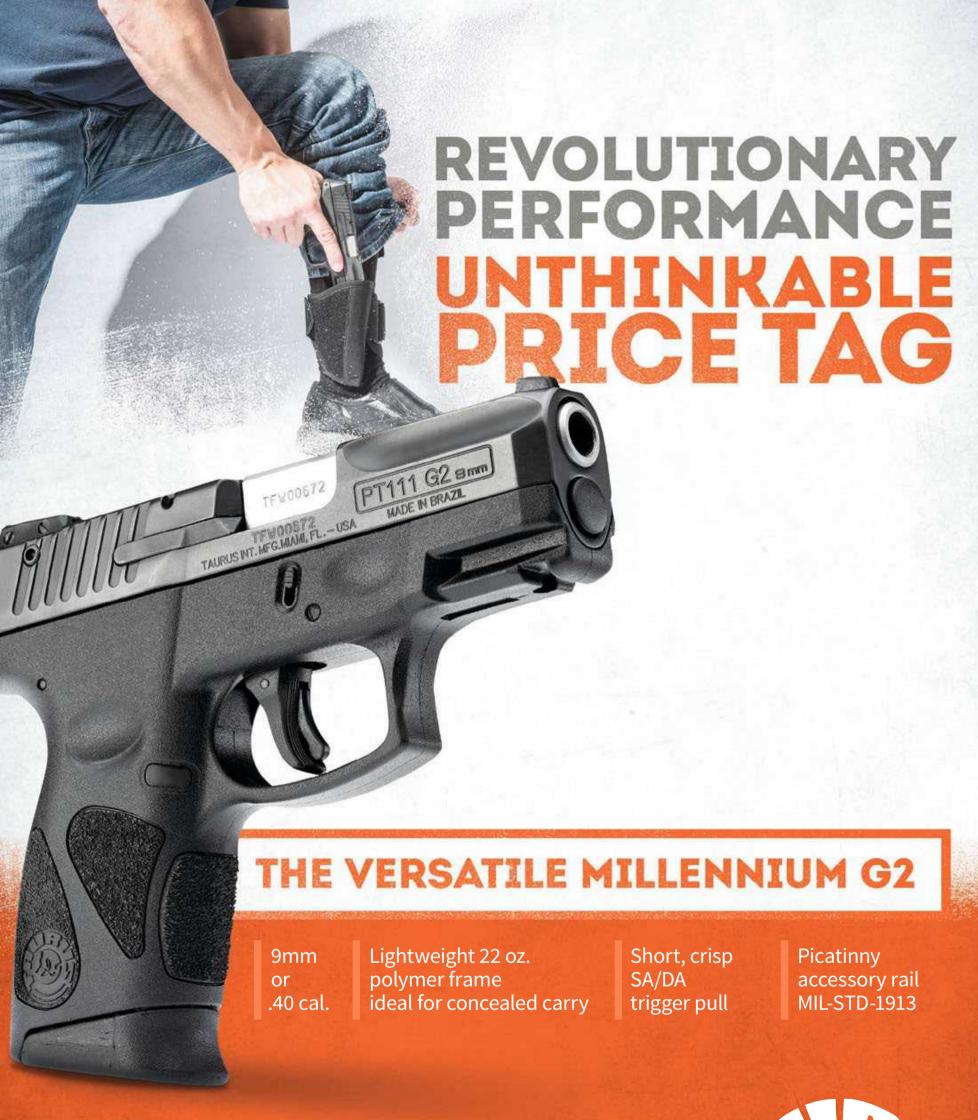
It just so happens that along with Leupold's new riflescope review this week is a new rifle from Ruger. The Ruger Precision Rifle. This rifle is a highly configurable, in-line recoil path, bolt-action rifle offering outstanding accuracy and long-range capability.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 26TH / S&W CLASSIC REVOLVERS

There are a lot of handgunners out there that still like the classic blued steel, double-action revolver.S&W is one firearms manufacturer who built its reputation on that platform, and it has revisited the category by offering an array of DA revolvers that range from .22 rimfire to .44 Magnum. While some hardcore wheel gun believers think the shooting sports category is overloaded with polymer pistols, S&W has introduced a line of revolvers that will remind every handgunner about why these revolvers were deemed classics in their day.

"Zig-zag" may sound like a confusing term to use when describing a tactical training session, but it employs tips and techniques that could be a real-life life-saver. We also take a look at the most popular .22 semiauto rifle ever made, Ruger's 10/22, and show how simple it is to drop in a trigger that is being offered by...who else, Ruger.





View the complete Millennium G2 specs at **TaurusUSA.com**.



HANDGUNS | SPEEDLOADS | Compiled by J. SCOTT RUPP

USA! USA! USA! USA! U.S. SHOOTERS GEAR UP FOR THE 2016 OLYMPICS IN RIO DE JANEIRO.

By J. Scott Rupp



HANDGUNS MAGAZINE FOCUSES PRIMAR-

ily on the defensive use of pistols and revolvers, but right now there is group of dedicated men and women gearing up for the 2016 Olympic Games, where they will act as ambassadors for the shooting sports on a world stage. And with the Rio de Janeiro Games only a few months away—they start in August—I thought many of you might appreciate being brought up to speed on what our athletes are up to.

Unlike the old days, you can't just waltz into the U.S. team tryouts, win your event(s) and go to the Olympics. Making an Olympic team is a long process, one that usually takes years and certainly starts well before any particular Olympic Games.

USA Shooting is our national governing body for the shooting sports. It hosts sanctioned matches around the country, and athletes who fire a minimum qualifying score (MQS) at one of these matches earn invitations to the USA Shooting National Championships. Athletes who perform at the top levels at these championships can earn a berth on the National Team or the National Development Team.

Shooters who make the National Team have the chance to get on traveling squads that compete in events such as the Pan Am Games, World Championships and other World Cup-level matches, where athletes vie for country quota slots. Each country gets a max of two slots per event—depending on how well their athletes perform—although the shooter who wins the country quota slot isn't guaranteed to be the one who gets to shoot that event in the Olympics.

Shooters must also fire an MQS set by the International Shooting Sports Federation at a World Cup-level match to be individually eligible to compete in the Olympics. The MQS must be fired at least once during a set period prior to the Olympics. In other words, just because an athlete fired an MQS 10 years ago doesn't make him or her eligible for the current Games.

USA Shooting offers two paths to making the Olympic team for athletes who have fired an MQS. One is through a point system in which shooters earn points based on the number of top-eight finishes they've achieved in World Cup-level and other select competitions. After the 2015 World Cup Final, which concluded in September, the pistol shooter who has the most points in his or her event earns a berth on the U.S. Olympic team. In men's rapidfire pistol, that would be two-time Olympian Keith Sanderson. He is the only U.S. pistol shooter who managed enough top-eight finishes to even be considered under the point system.

Sticking with men's rapid-fire for a moment, the U.S. has earned the maximum two quota slots. The second slot will be filled by the highest-place, MQS-qualified finisher at the Smallbore Olympic Team Trials in April. The U.S. shooters in free pistol and sport pistol—in which we've earned only one quota slot each—will also be determined at this match.

Air pistol is a little different in that there will be a two-part trial. The U.S. has earned only a single quota slot in both men's and women's air, and the shooters who will represent our country will be determined by finishes at the Airgun Olympic Team Trials in December (Part I in Colorado Springs, Colorado) and June (Part II at Camp Perry, Ohio).

Here's a look at the events.

with any .22 LR pistol. The course of fire is 60 shots, one-handed, at 50 meters in two hours—at a 10-ring only 50mm in diameter. "Imagine standing there for up to two hours trying to hit a 10-ring not much bigger than a casino chip with a one-hand hold," national pistol coach Sergey Luzov said, noting the event is very unforgiving due to the distance.

Our last gold medal in this event was won by Huelet Benner in 1952. Franklin Green won a silver in 1964, and Offutt Pinion captured a bronze in 1956. So we have a lot of catching up to do.

SPORT PISTOL A women's event with .22 LR pistols; compen-

sators and brakes aren't allowed. This is a two-part event shot at 25 meters. Thirty shots are fired in the Precision stage (10-ring just under two inches) and 30 shots in the Rapid-Fire stage (10-ring just under four inches).

Precision consists of six fiveshot series fired on a single target within five minutes at the shooter's own pace. In Rapid Fire, competitors fire a single shot but with a three-second time limit; seven seconds later they do it again. Our only medalist in this event is Ruby Fox, who earned a silver in 1984.

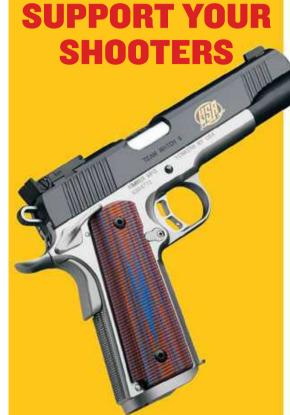
RAPID-FIRE PISTOL A men's event with .22 LR pistols; compensators and brakes aren't allowed. It's fired at 25 meters, at a 10-ring just shy of four inches. Shooters engage five side-by-side turning targets—firing one shot at each before the targets turn back. Stage times for the five-shot strings are eight, six and four seconds. Shot total is 60.

"If something goes wrong in a string, there's no time to deal with it," Luzov said. "And one lapse could put you out of contention."

I witnessed that very thing during the finals of the 1988 Games in Seoul, Korea, when U.S. shooter John McNally went into the finals in second place but had a disastrous couple of strings that dropped him to seventh.

The U.S. has won three medals in Rapid Fire, all gold: William Mc-Millan (1960), Henry Bailey (1924) and Alfred Lane (1912). That's quite a drought, one Keith Sanderson hopes to change. He finished 14th in 2012.

AIR PISTOL Fired at 10 meters with compressed-air pistols, it's 60 shots for men in 1:45 and 40 shots for women in 1:15. The 10-ring is less than half an inch, so with the



Obviously, it requires a lot of resources to develop and field an Olympic team. USA Shooting supports the athletes' travel and training, but it can't do it alone. Fortunately, companies in our industry contribute to USA Shooting: Kimber (which sells the Team Match II pistol you see here, a portion of the proceeds going to the U.S. team), Winchester, Ruger, Hornady and others

You can do your part, too. Visit the USASHOOTING.ORG website and click on "Donate." At the very least, check out the team store and buy a hat or a shirt or something (Christmas is coming, after all). Our athletes will thank you, and you just might help our country win a medal in Rio this summer.—*JSR*

slow barrel time of the air pistol, trigger control and follow-through are critical.

On the men's side, Erich
Buljung won a silver in 1988
(our only shooting medal at that
Games), and Jason Turner got the
bronze in 2008—albeit on a technicality. He finished fourth, but
the North Korean shooter in front
of him was disqualified for

HANDGUNS | SPEEDLOADS

— failing a drug test. Our women have yet to medal in this event.

NEW FINALS FORMAT In past Games, the top finishers (top eight for all events except Rapid Fire, where it's top six) after the standard course of fire earned the right to compete in the Finals. Their

scores in the Finals round were added to their qualifying scores, and the medals were determined by total points.

For the 2016 Rio Games, however, the qualifying scores are thrown out, and the shooters who make the Finals start from scratch. Win the Finals, you win the gold. On the flip side, you could be miles ahead of the field going into the Finals and come away empty-handed if things don't go your way. It'll be interesting to see if this new format achieves the goal of making shooting a more telegenic Olympic sport.

OLD SCHOOL BY BOB SHELL

DOUBLE-BARREL PINFIRE

INCREASING FIREPOWER HAS BEEN AN

objective since guns were invented. Before self-contained cartridges came into use, firepower was limited by the speed with which a gun could be reloaded. One invention to solve this was the pinfire ignition system. It is a self-contained round, which enabled it to be fired and reloaded faster than a cap-and-ball revolver.

Invented in 1835 by Casimir
Lefaucheux, the round consists of
a case, primer, powder and a bullet. A percussion cap, which is the
primer, is placed into the bottom of
the case. Powder and a bullet were
added in a similar manner to a modern round. The difference is there
is a hole in the case where a pin is
inserted, and it rests against the
percussion cap. To fire, the hammer
hits the pin, setting off the round.
While the system is reliable, ammo
is slow and difficult to make.

The gun I have is a double-barrel 9mm with a folding bayonet. There are no markings on it, which tells me it was made in Europe (probably in Belgium) and was smuggled to the Confederacy during the Civil War. The lack of markings is because the maker did not want the Union to know where the guns came in order to avoid repercussions after the war.







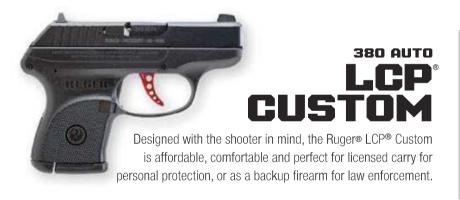
The pinfire system used a pin inserted into the wall of a cartridge, and the hammer striking the pin fired the round. This 9mm was a woefully underpowered round, and the bayonet on Shell's sample was probably more lethal.

Many pinfires were 9mms; the largest caliber generally available was 12mm. Both barrels in my 9mm are smoothbore, though one is tighter—indicating a choke. With such a small cartridge shot loads would be almost useless. The bullet load is very underpowered as well.

The previous owner of this pinfire has documentation that one of his ancestors, who served in the Civil War, purchased this gun sometime in the 1860s. Since it's in such good shape, I doubt it saw any real action. After making ammo for this gun and shooting it—and observing its lack of power—I wouldn't have carried it. A 112-grain bullet at 338 fps produces an anemic 28.4 ft.-lbs. of energy—less energy than a .22 CB cap. The bayonet is essentially more dangerous than the ammo.

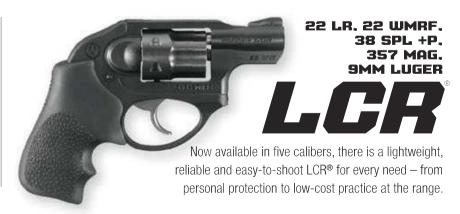


Ruger offers lightweight, compact handguns for every personal protection need.









Join Ruger and help us raise \$4,000,000 for the NRA.

VISIT: RUGER.COM/2MILLION



HANDGUNS | SPEEDLOADS



Shoot Like A Girl

The Shoot Like A Girl organization has added a nationwide postal firearms match to its drive to raise money for breast cancer research. The match—currently underway and continuing until February 28—is open to men, women, young adults (15-17), youth (12-14) and cubs (under 12). The group hopes the addition of a firearms competition will boost its 2016 contribution to the National Breast Cancer Foundation to \$20,000.

Participating ranges bear no costs other than to provide free range time to competitors. Cost for competitors is \$20 per shooter—all of which is donated to NBCF. If you're interested in being a host range, email iShootForTheGirls@shootlikeagirl.com

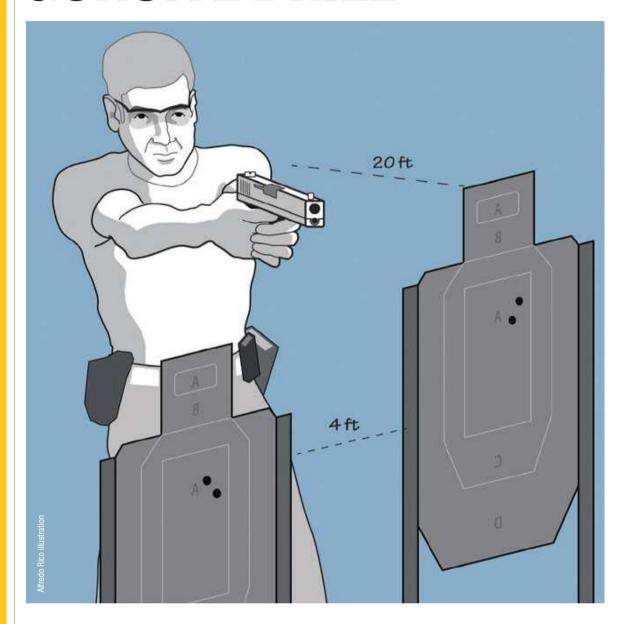


Female & Armed

Female & Armed is Lynne Finch's follow-up to her first two tomes—Taking Your First Shot and The Home Security Handbook. She takes a well-rounded look at personal defense, and I like that she starts out discussing the color-coded levels of awareness and builds from there. She tackles a lot of topics, some more in-depth than others. In fact, there's really not much on guns and gear, but the breadth of the material—training, gun retention, planning from a family perspective, carjacking and more—would give most women a good foundation. \$15, SkyhorsePublishing.com.

SKILLS DRILLS BY DAVE SPAULDING

GUNSITE DRILL



THIS IS NOT AN OFFICIAL DRILL TAUGHT

at the Gunsite Academy, although it did stem from a gun writer event I attended there. I noticed a number of shooters had difficulty putting together essential shooting skills. The writers were asked to draw and fire two rounds on two targets in four seconds, and I told one of the Gunsite instructors I thought there was enough time for a reload, too. We decided to try it, and after a bit of work, it turned into this. I think it works critical skills into one smooth, continuous drill.

GEAR Gun, holster, four to five rounds of ammo, spare magazine and pouch, electronic timer

DRILL Target can be anything

that represents proper shot placement to the human chest: eight-inch circle, 6x10 piece of paper, USPSA or IDPA A zone. Place two targets four feet apart, 20 feet downrange. At the signal, draw and fire two rounds on the first target (doesn't matter which you engage first), do a speed load and fire two rounds at the second target.

less. A miss or exceeding the time limit means you've failed. Once you're proficient, consider drawing and reloading from concealment, performing the reload from slide lock, adding a lateral step on the draw or making the target smaller (a 3x5 card, for example).



FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

HOW AVOIDANCE CAN BE YOUR BEST SELF-DEFENSE WEAPON.

IF YOU'RE FACED WITH A LETHAL

threat—for instance, a man with a gun saying, "I'm going to kill you!"—you don't have much difficulty in deciding to use lethal force against him if you have the means to do so. You either fight or die. Were it only this simple for the great majority of real-world encounters.

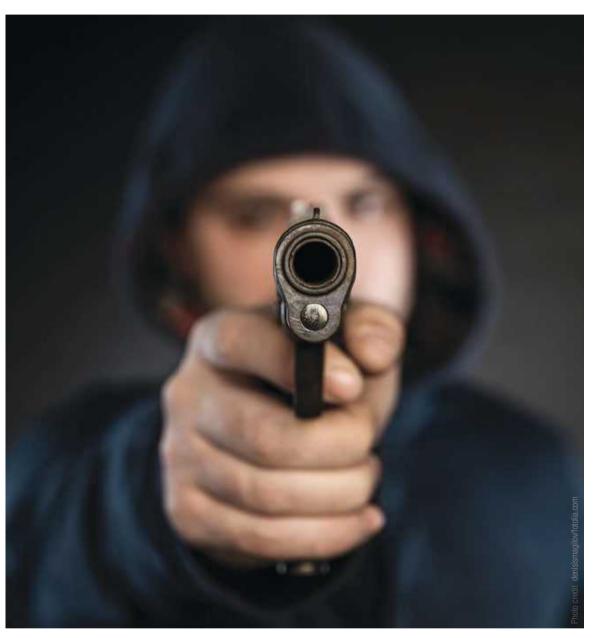
Unfortunately, most confrontations are not black and white but come in shades of gray. The assailant or assailants don't conveniently begin their actions by loudly announcing their intentions, nor do they carry signs spelling out their goals.

An attack has as many faces as there are people walking the earth. There is no way anyone can lay out "maps" to follow that address every attack. There is no "If he does or says 'A,' then you respond with 'B'; but if he does 'C,' you must respond with 'D' or 'E.'

Mapping out an approach sounds fine in the classroom or on a training range but will not hold water when it comes to a real encounter. The only benefit of being so taught is you start to think about how, when and if to react. The bad guys are not stupid, by and large, and work hard at hiding their game plan until the very last second, and that's about all the time you're going to get to make a decision.

Much is made of being in various conditions of awareness, but unless you are totally programmed to react, you can easily be seriously hurt or killed while attempting to make a decision.

For example, if someone were to approach you with his hand in



☐ If a gunman has the drop on you, in most cases—but not all—it's wise to do what he says. The best way not to have to deal with this is to figure out how to avoid such situations altogether.

his pocket, announce that he has a gun, and say, "Your money or your life!" the most reasonable response is to give him the money.

I'm not recommending cowardice or rewarding criminal behavior. But stop and think: You are already way behind the curve, you didn't see it coming, and if that really is a gun in his pocket you are now at gunpoint.

He's already given you choices, and the notion of successfully drawing into a loaded gun is not smart. By complying (assuming he doesn't shoot you anyway) you have forestalled all the personal and financial hardships armed resistance brings with it.

You have not injured or killed anyone. You're not arrested. You're not on the 6 o'clock news. You're not spending upwards of \$50,000 dollars for your defense. You're not among the newly unemployed. You're not abandoned by your acquaintances. You're also not paying for counseling or medical treat-



2 EXTRA MAGS, DUAL PISTOL RANGE BAG, & DOUBLE MAG POUCH **FREE!** WITH THE PURCHASE OF **ANY NEW SPRINGFIELD ARMORY® PISTOL!**

















SPRINGFIELD ARMORY. USA

LOADED MC OPERATOR®



HANDGUNS | DEFENSIVE TACTICS

ment for your suddenly declining mental and physical health.
This is what can easily become the totality of your world when you use lethal force.

Another sobering phenomenon is that the person goes from assailant to victim. As my late friend Roger Tucker wryly observed, "There's

This is not where you yank out your blaster, but you should be firm and focused.

nothing like killing a man to make him a saint." The same drug-using ex-felon and all-around bad guy suddenly becomes someone who is described by fellow family members and acquaintances as "just beginning to turn his life around" and that he was just on his way home from shopping or church.

Most of the time, if you're threatened, you figure, "Well, he probably just wants some money," and, being unwilling to use lethal force, you don't resist.

The problem is when you begin getting indicators as to the bad guy's full intentions, such as being herded into a walk-in freezer or, in a worst-case scenario, told to kneel down. Becoming part of the "freezer herd" dramatically increases the odds of being killed, and kneeling down almost surely means you're going to die. At that point, of course, you do whatever you have to do to stay alive.

The gray areas are where the threat is not this specific. For instance, when someone asking for money approaches you, it's hard to determine if this is just an aggressive panhandler or the prelude to someone intent on robbing you. It

can be either, depending on how you react. If you cringe and go into "victim" mode, the "panhandler" may see this as an opportunity to take all your money.

In these situations, you should react rudely and abruptly. There's no room for indecision, self-doubt, what-ifs or questions. This is not where you yank out your blaster, but you should be firm and focused. I've written before how difficult it can be to be rude, and a true bad guy is actually counting on your resistance to being impolite. This is how he engages you and gets inside your defenses.

Another problem is that most folks have not had a physical confrontation since grade school. Society strongly discourages violence, particularly physical violence, and the bad guys use all of our good societal habits against us.

If someone who seems threatening approaches you, ignore him—but don't run. If you're of advanced years, his first thought might well be: "He is hard of hearing."

Look for a safe spot to get to, a store or restaurant. Now the potential threat has to decide whether to leave you alone or declare his real intent by continuing his approach in which case you are likely better prepared to deal with it.

Keep in mind that avoidance is not cowardice. Anyone can start a confrontation; it doesn't require much effort. Avoiding one, however, requires using your head. Stopping one before it starts? That takes self-discipline, effort and skill.

While firearms training and tactics are certainly necessary tools for self defense, it might serve us well to devote part of our self-defense training to learning when and how to be impolite or rude and how to simply ignore people—while being quite aware of their presence, of course.

NAROUCING AHE NEW

applied where it matters most - to the optimize contact between the human Frame features working in unison to hand and pistol. Ergonomic science interface of the firearm and shooter. FEEL THE DIFFERENCE **ACTUAL SIZE** SHIP ZONE

WWW.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

THE SUPPRESSOR FACTOR

DOES A SUPPRESSOR SLOW BULLETS OR INHIBIT THEIR PERFORMANCE?

IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION,

you might not have noticed that suppressors are the hot new thing. As with redheaded supermodels, not all agree about liking or disliking them. But they are here and they are hot, and you're going to be seeing them at the gun club (the suppressors, not the supermodels).

To make a suppressor as quiet as possible, you need to use ammunition known as subsonic. That is, the bullet travels slower than the speed of sound, so the supersonic "crack" (which a suppressor cannot affect) isn't created.

So it's quiet, but how does it perform? Before we get into that, let's look at how a suppressor works. The current designs are tubes with internal partitions called baffles. They are attached to the muzzle of your handgun, and the clearance hole down the center of the baffles is larger than the diameter of the bullet so the bullet does not touch the baffles. Once the bullet leaves the muzzle, the gas propelling it is released into the baffles, and for the most part the gas no longer pushes the bullet.

Modern add-on suppressors do not decrease bullet velocity, which brings us back to subsonic ammunition. At standard atmospheric conditions, the speed of sound is 1,116 fps, and because any single batch of ammo is going to vary somewhat in velocity, most subsonic stuff is loaded to about 1,000 fps.

In some calibers this isn't a problem. The .45 ACP, for example, has only a few loads that exceed 1,116 fps, so you can pretty much pick any of them and have subsonic ammunition without having to pay extra for it. You can even load your own, provided you



△ Ammo makers know how to make bullets expand at subsonic velocities— except for the lead roundnose .22 LR, which rarely expands in any case when fired from a pistol.

don't use cast bullets. (Suppressors hate cast bullets, and you will hate having used them when it comes time to clean your suppressor.)

Similarly, the normal 180-grain ammunition in most .40 S&W loads will be subsonic. For instance, the shelves full of 180-grain FMJs you can select from will commonly be around 900 to 950 fps at most. The lighter bullets, however, will often exceed the speed of sound, and if you want ultra-quiet .40s, you can't go 165 grains or lighter.

When we get to 9mm, things get interesting. Almost all 9mm ammunition will exceed the speed of sound—or be so close on their average that one or two in each magazine will be over the speed limit.

To keep the speed under the limit, we have to increase bullet weight. And there a trend that began in 9mm ammunition some time ago comes to our rescue: 147-grain bullets. You will have to do some searching to find any 147-grain or heavier bullet 9mm Luger load that delivers supersonic velocities out of a handgun barrel. And if you did, you wouldn't want to shoot it because recoil would be stout.

It is also possible to have lighter bullets be subsonic, but do we really want to be pushing 124-grain or 115-grain full-metal-jacket bullets at 950 fps? The latter is getting perilously close to .380 ballistics and defeats the purpose of having a 9mm in the first place. So heavyweights it is for the 9mm.

The last cartridge we might commonly encounter that would be loaded subsonic for use in handgun suppressors is .22 Long Rifle. Here, the ammo companies are between a rock and a hard place because .22 pistols are infamous for being very fussy about ammunition—both in terms of accuracy and reliability.

Rimfire ammunition makers know if they deviate from the standard 40-grain bullet weight at normal velocities they do so at their peril. So to make rimfire ammo subsonic, they ease on up the powder charge by a small amount and let velocities slip just below supersonic. They know that if they ease up too much, reliability will suffer. They also have a very small margin for weight, and if they do adjust it, it isn't by much.

Ammunition manufacturers know at what velocities they will be pushing their bullets, and they craft the bullets accordingly. Hence we should not expect problems shooting subsonic ammunition through a suppressor-equipped pistol. But as with many things in life, there's one way to find out for sure. With that idea in mind, I gathered up a selection of subsonic ammunition and suppressor-equipped pistols to test them in.

For the 9mm, I grabbed a Night-hawk and a Gemtech GM-9. For the .45, I used my Doublestar rail gun and put an Innovative Arms Shepherd on it. For the rimfire testing, I went with a Ruger .22/45 and an Innovative Arms Apex.

The .22 and 9mm ammo I tested is loaded to be subsonic while the Asym .45 is subsonic by its nature. I chronographed ammunition through the pistols bare and then with suppressors on them. I found a small increase in velocity with the suppressors installed, due to the marginal boost the residual pressure inside the suppressor gives the bullets.

There was no change in accuracy with suppressor off or on, although in some instances there was a small zero shift. For instance, the typical groups were two to three inches at 25 yards, with a shift in point of impact of an inch or so, bare to suppressed. I've had pistols shift point of impact an inch just by changing ammo, so I think any zero change brought about by adding or removing a suppressor is insignificant.

The idea that a subsonic load will be less effective comes up when people discuss suppressors. In my testing I found the 9mm and .45 both penetrated to the same depth suppressed as they had unsuppressed and that bullets designed to expand did so just as much even when fired through a suppressor. This should not come as any surprise because they were designed to expand at subsonic speeds.

The .22 was a different matter.

There was no expansion whatsoever—
not that it does anyway out of a pistol.

With velocities just under 900 fps,
the 42-grain Gemtech bullet hasn't a
chance of expanding, but, boy, does
it penetrate. For being such a "little"
cartridge, it gave full FBI penetration
depth, 14 inches plus, and in that we
can see why the .22 LR can be such a
killer—even though it isn't a stopper.

In summary, we have a minor boost in velocity, no change in accuracy, small change in point of impact, and the same terminal performance (as tested in ballistic gelatin). So there is no need to worry about a loss of performance when using a suppressor on a pistol.

Why concern ourselves with suppressors at all? To keep from going deaf. I was able to conduct all testing without hearing protection. The .22 was so quiet I could hear the empties hitting the ground.

Moreover, in a defensive situation—particularly inside the home—a suppressor adds a key advantage. Unless you have the presence of mind to grab hearing protection before facing an attacker, the sound of a gun going off in the confines of your house is going to be disorienting. Not so with a suppressor, which could help you prevail in a deadly-force encounter.

SUPPRESSOR VELOCITY COMPARISON

Cartridge/Bullet	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Unsuppressed Velocity (fps)	Suppressed Velocity (fps)	
.22/Gemtech Subsonic LRN	42	887	892	
9mm/HPR Subsonic Emcon JHP	147	923	937	
9mm/HPR Subsonic Emcon TMJ	147	912	943	
.45/Asym Bonded JHP	230	799	821	

Notes: Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a LabRadar chronograph set to measure 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: JHP jacketed hollowpoint: LRN, lead roundnose: TMJ, total metal jacket



THE ANKLE SOLUTION

DISMISSED BY SOME, THE ANKLE RIG CAN BE A BIG ASSET FOR COPS.

MY FIRST EXPOSURE TO THE ANKLE

holster was at a drive-in movie while I was in high school. I was with a girlfriend watching "The French Connection," the 1971 film starring Gene Hackman as Jimmy "Popeye" Doyle. This character and case was based on a real NYPD detective named Eddie Egan, who also went on to a fairly successful run in Hollywood as an actor in films and TV.

In the film, the Doyle character carried his Colt or Smith & Wesson snubbie .38 (I say this because I noted years later the gun changed with the scene) in an ankle holster. I can remember, even so many years later, how cool I thought this was. As best as I can tell from stopping the film on video, it appears to be an early JayPee rig, which used a thick gray felt to pad the ankle and a lacing system similar to a boot. And it's the very same rig I purchased when I bought my first off-duty revolver—a Security **Industries Police Pocket Magnum** (PPM)—in the mid-1970s.

The PPM was a stainless steel five-shot, J-frame-size .357 revolver, decades before Smith & Wesson made its version. The finger-groove wood grips looked much like the "boot grip" that currently adorns many short-barrel revolvers. It was quite accurate.

I really liked the gun, but my department's range officer at the time derided it as "not a Colt or Smith & Wesson," and I was shamed into selling it. Dumb. I wish I still had that gun. I then bought an S&W Model 60, which I continued to carry in the ankle rig.

I really liked ankle carry. It was



Ankle rigs, typified here by models from Richie Leather (top) and Wilderness Tactical Products, offer a viable way to carry a backup gun. But it's important to understand the limitations of this carry style.

so easy and convenient. I had a gun on me, but it was not a pain in the rear to conceal, even in the summer months. I always figured I could get to it if needed. Unfortunately, reality often times does not coincide with what we might believe, and it almost cost me my life.

I was working an off-duty security job at a local hotel to help make ends meet, patrolling the hallways and parking lot from 11 p.m. until five a.m. I wore plainclothes, and the ankle-holstered Model 60 was perfect for the task. Or so I thought.

One summer evening I arrived

for work at the motor lodge, and after saying hello to the front desk staff, I went back to the rear office to clock in.

As I walked back out front to see what was going on that evening, I took off my glasses and was cleaning them with the tail of my shirt. As I rounded the corner, I noticed in my blurry vision the desk staff all had their hands in the air. I then looked up and saw a blurry white male holding a blurry handgun in my direction. He yelled at me to get my hands up, which I did immediately.

It was at that moment I had

TEAM CRITICAL



CRITICAL DEFENSE®

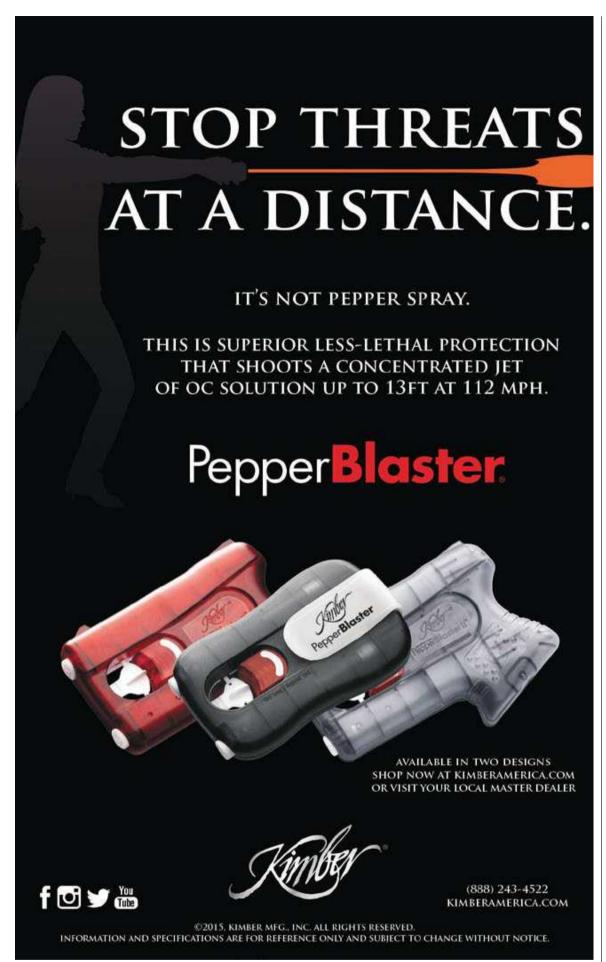
Optimized concealed carry and personal defense handgun ammunition featuring the patented FTX® bullet that unlike conventional hollow points won't clog when fired through clothing.



CRITICAL DUTY®

Tough, rugged, tactical handgun ammunition featuring the patented FlexLock® bullet that delivers "barrier blind" terminal performance when shot through common urban barriers.







HANDGUNS | ON PATROL

— an epiphany: My shooting hand was as far from my holstered handgun as was possible, and I could not see well enough to really fight. Oops.

Fortunately, the robber only wanted money and fled. As he ran out of the lobby, my superhero switch tripped, and I decided to give chase. I put on my glasses and leaped over the counter—only to trap my foot in a wire pamphlet rack, ending up face down on the floor.

I regained my footing and ran to the dual exit doors, deciding at that moment it would be prudent to draw my ankle gun—only to have the entry rug slide out from under me. I was face down again for the second time in 15 seconds.

I finally got my gun out, stood up and ran into the parking lot—only to realize I was totally exposed. I could not see the suspect, so I decided to round the corner of the building—the only direction he could have gone to get out of view so quickly. As I did so, I heard a loud "bang" and sensed an object whiz by my head. My superhero cape came off as I dropped to the ground and crawled back to the cover of the building corner.

I discovered almost too late the ankle rig is a liability as a primary carry location, but at the same time I realized it was a real asset for a backup gun. While seated in a police cruiser, the ankle is easily reached, and with just a bit of training the ankle gun can be accessed from a standing, kneeling and supine position. The anklemounted backup gun offers options, and options are always good when fighting for your life.

Eventually, I explored newer rigs that did not require the lacing system of the old one and settled on two models. The first was made by the late, great Lou Alessi, who

used thick felt to pad the ankle and help hold it in place while running. The hand-molded holster body kept the gun tightly in place without a retention strap, and the hookand-loop strip was not only easy to put on and off but also allowed for tightness adjustment. A later variation incorporated a D-Ring that made the strap even more adjustable.

Lou's former partner, Skip Richie (RICHIELEATHER.COM), is still making these holsters. I recently ordered one for my new Glock 43, and I am happy to report the quality of this rig is just as good as the one I first received in the early 1980s.

The other rig I liked due to its unique design was made by a company called Renegade Holster and Leather Co. It's no longer in business, but Phoenix-based Wilderness Tactical Products (TheWilderness Tactical Products (TheWilderness.com) is selling a design based on Renegade's Cozy Partner.

Fittingly called the Renegade, it features a few improvements over the original, including a Velcrohook overlock and a retention strap made from Wilderness's own XHD elastic webbing for easy but positive release. The elastic pouch on the Wilderness holster will be very tight initially. Ignore this and cram your gun in place. The elastic will "relax" and mold around your gun in a day or so.

The Richie and Wilderness designs could not be any more different, but both offer a high level of performance. It's just a matter of which holster works better for you. I found the Richie/Alessi design works better for people with bony ankles while the Renegade/Wilderness elastic rig works great around boot tops.

The ankle rig can be both liability and asset. Like many things, it depends on how you intend to use it and when you need it.





SIZE MATTERS

THREE HOLSTERS ILLUSTRATE WHAT SIZE BRINGS TO CONCEALED CARRY.

THERE SEEMS TO BE TWO BASIC SCHOOLS

of thought on holster size. The first is to make the holster as small as possible while having it still do the job. The second is to not sacrifice comfort, security, stability or a quality draw stroke and don't worry about how much real estate the holster is eating up at the belt line because the only important thing is properly mounting the gun.

You'll always have extremes at both ends of the spectrum. On the large end of the spectrum, you'll find the Low Profile System from High Threat Concealment (HighThreatConcealment.com). While the name might throw you off, what this company makes is an integrated belt/holster/pouch system where the Kydex pieces interlock on your belt, almost forming a stiff girdle stretching from hipbone to hipbone, depending on how much gear you're interested in wearing.

I've long railed against the giant Kydex pancake holsters aimed at the concealed carry crowd that take up unnecessary belt real estate, but the HTC gear is aimed at a different market segment, and the extra Kydex is there to connect to the neighboring gear. The double belt system is directly inspired by the belt-withina-belt setup used by competition shooters. The inner belt threads through the belt loops, the outer belt goes around it.

How do they stay in place? Hookand-loop fasteners. The exterior of the inner belt is the fuzzy side, and the inside of the outer belt has the plastic hooks. You can take off all your gear simply by undoing your buckle, without worrying about your pants falling down.



The next size down from the unnecessarily large Kydex amoeba holsters are the ones that take up a little extra space beyond the holster body itself, but for a reason. A good example of that is the Bentley model from Comfort Holsters (ComfortHolsters.com), and I obtained one for my SIG P226.

This is a premium inside-the-waistband holster made of four different materials—Kydex, leather, suede and a gel cushion—not counting the steel clips and tension screws with their rubber grommets. Just looking at the construction, I can see a lot of work goes into these holsters.

The body of the holster is thick Kydex, with a slick interior for a smooth draw and a pebbled exterior for looks. It is molded for specific firearms and has two tension screws to adjust tightness. The Kydex comes up in back to protect the wearer's body from the gun. The holster has two belt clips, front and rear. The rear clip is low, mounted to a Kydex tab. Positioning the belt clip in this spot at this angle is designed to pull the gun butt in closer to your body, aiding concealment.

The forward belt clip is mounted on a thick leather tab. Everyone's body shape is different, and having this forward tab be flexible by making it out of leather allows it to bend around the wearer's body.

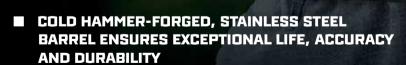
Each of the tabs where the belt clips are mounted has three different mounting holes arranged in a line, and the belt clips pivot, so the angle of the holster can be adjusted from nearly vertical to close to a 45-degree angle. If you're not at the extreme end of the tabs you can adjust the ride height of the holster as well. The belt clips also



ENGINEERED TO

NEW FOR 2015

THE FNST COMPACT



- SNAG-FREE CONTROLS
- **INCLUDES THREE MAGAZINES WITH PURCHASE**

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

FNHUSA.COM/FNS-SERIES



DISTINCT ADVANTAGE™

HANDGUNS | ESSENTIALS

— attach to the tabs below the clip itself, which means your shirt can be tucked in over the holster. It's hard to get more "custom" than that.

The entire back side of the holster, where it presses against the wearer's body, is a gel cushion for the ultimate in comfort. The cushion itself is wrapped in a thin layer of suede to allow your skin to breathe better.

All this work is designed not to conceal small guns, which don't need much help to disappear, but rather to conceal large guns. How well does it conceal? My daily carry for the past six months has been a SIG P226 in an outside-the-waist-band Kydex belt holster, concealed by a jacket, sweatshirt or unbuttoned Hawaiian shirt, depending on

the weather. But I bought a mountain bike recently and have been riding it. Not in the mountains—that would be silly—but in the suburbs. I am not comfortable wearing my standard holster while riding my bike. The gun prints blatantly as I lean over the handlebars and is clearly identifiable from across the street.

But I want to have a big gun with me. So I tried out the Bentley on a few bike rides, first checking it out in a mirror. Even under a solid color unbuttoned shirt the pistol nearly disappears, and the butt (the biggest printer) is barely noticeable with me bent over the bike. "Winner winner, chicken dinner," as they say.

The Bentley is offered in different colors and patterns, with steel

or nylon belt clips, for a variety of different handguns, with models starting at \$125.

At the extreme opposite end of the spectrum is the MIC holster (TheMICholster.com). MIC stands for Minimal Inside Carry, and the name says it all. A mea culpa: When I recently reviewed the Taurus Curve in these pages, I noted the provided "holster" for it was pretty neat.

The holster was actually a polymer cover that snapped over the trigger guard and integral light/laser unit. Attached to the polymer cover was a lanyard made of 550 paracord, which should be wrapped around your belt. When the pistol is drawn, the lanyard ensures the trigger guard cover pops right off the pistol during a natural draw stroke.



What I didn't realize at the time was that this concept did not originate with Taurus, but with the MIC holster—in 1997. I don't know how I was oblivious to this holster for so long, and by now there are a lot of imitators. The MIC is the original.

The MIC holster is a form-fitted piece of Kydex designed to wrap around the trigger guard of your pistol and snap into place. It completely prevents the trigger from being pulled while adding almost zero bulk and weight to the gun. It does not block the magazine release or other controls.

A 10-inch piece of nylon cord is attached to the front, and it's designed to be secured to your belt. While it is often used in combination with the metal belt clips that attach to the

striker plate on some semiautos, the clip isn't necessary. When you stuff your pistol into your waistband the cord prevents the pistol from falling through. Upon drawing the gun, the holster pops right off the gun, allowing access to the trigger.

Not actually carrying the gun on your person? You can use the MIC's cord to tether the holster to your purse, car seat frame or bed post.

In addition to now being offered for just about every kind of auto or small revolver you're likely to want to carry, the MIC holster is offered in several versions. There is the 60/40 version, which covers not just the trigger guard but part of the frame, offering 60 percent retention and 40 percent speed. And there is the Razor's Edge MIC, which covers

only the trigger guard and offers 50/50 retention/speed. MIC does not recommend you leave its holsters in a car on a hot summer day as Kydex is a thermoplastic and will lose some of its tension

For this article I obtained a MIC for the new Glock 43 I was testing. It was a little stiff at first but broke in after being put on and taken off about a dozen times. I arranged the cord on my belt so that the pistol sat just below the belt inside my pants while I ran errands, and it seemed to work well. Of course, it is not as stable as a traditional holster, but it works as advertised. The great thing about the MIC Holster is that it does exactly what it is intended to do, but because it's so simple it is inexpensive. Most models are just \$19.



HANDGUNS | GUNS & GEAR | BY J. SCOTT RUPP



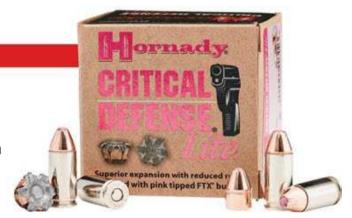
SPRINGFIELD RANGE OFFICER CHAMPION

The Range Officer Compact we reviewed in the August/September issue has a cousin: the Range Officer Champion. The specs are basically the same: fiber-optic front sight; low-profile combat rear; beavertail safety with memory bump; ramped stainless steel four-inch barrel; forged carbon steel slide; and forged aluminum frame. But the Champion gives you one additional round in its slightly longer grip. Available in 9mm (nine-round capacity, 31.5 ounces) and .45 ACP (seven-round capacity, 30 ounces).

{\$899, Springfield-Armory.com}

> HORNADY CRITICAL DEFENSE LITE 9MM

I love the Critical Defense Lite load in my .38 Special J frame and am looking forward to running the new 9mm version in my pistols. The load pushes a 100-grain FTX bullet at 1,125 fps for 281 ft.-lbs. at the muzzle. It's enough oomph to cycle your semiauto and provides 10-inch penetration in the FBI heavy-clothing test—all with a 27 percent reduction in recoil over standard ammo. A portion of the proceeds benefits breast cancer research. {\$28, HORNADY.COM}



> LASERMAX SPARTAN

The Spartan's RailVise allows you to adjust for hand size and position on any Picatinny or Weaver rail. The laser fits subcompacts and larger pistols, and it's available in red or green. Built of fiberglass-reinforced nylon, it offers ambi activation via an oversize paddle. Modes include steady or pulse, and it has a 10-minute auto-timeout. Powered by a 1/3N battery, it weighs just 0.6 ounce. {\$99 (red), \$149 (green); LASERMAX.COM}





CROSSBREED HOLSTERS FOR LASERLYTE

LaserLyte makes its Trigger Guard Laser for Glock 42/43 pistols, and now CrossBreed is building holsters to accommodate them. Available in several inside- and outside-the-waistband styles. To find the one you want, visit CrossBreed's website, pick a style, then select your Glock model and look for the "with LaserLyte" option.

{LaserLyte.com, CrossBreedHolsters.com}

> PACHMAYR AMERICAN LEGEND S&W GRIPS

If you've got a round-butt J-, K-, L- or N-frame Smith & Wesson, dress it up with the newly designed American Legend grips. The grips have been updated with an improved contour while retaining the wraparound rubber panels, which fit the wood better than before. And now you have a choice of traditional rosewood or new charcoal laminate (shown).

{\$80, pachmayr.com}

30 HANDGUNS DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016



GIVE YOUR SUBCOMPACT FULL-SIZE IMPACT.

Bullet of standard construction fails at reduced velocity.



Remington Ultimate Defense Compact Handgun delivers maximum stopping power.



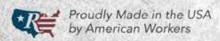


REMINGTON ULTIMATE DEFENSE COMPACT HANDGUN.

It's full-size stopping power for your compact handgun. With a brass jacket hollow point optimized for the lower velocities generated by shorter barrels, this load delivers the massive expansion and deep penetration you need in the face of danger. After dark, our proprietary low-flash propellent protects night vision for more accurate follow-ups. Only from Remington.



For maximum terminal performance in handguns with barrels of 4" or less.



Remington.

REMINGTON.COM

BY JAMES TARR

THE EXCELLENT WALTHER PPQ M2 IS NOW AVAILABLE IN .45 ACP, A FIRST FOR THE COMPANY AND A WINNER OF A GUN.

hile Walther's most recognizable pistol name is the PPK, its most recognizable pistol is the PPQ series, a polymer-framed striker-fired design introduced in 2011. And the latest version of the PPQ M2 is chambered in .45 ACP, a first for the company. The gun is made in Germany and imported by Walther Arms, which is based in Arkansas.

PPQ stands for Polizei Pistole (Police Pistol) Quick Defense and

could be described as an improved version of its P99, which was introduced in 1996. Quick Defense refers to the trigger system designed specifically for the PPQ, where the striker is fully pre-loaded prior to the trigger being pulled. This results in a lighter trigger pull, but more on that a bit later.

As a PPQ M2, the pistol features an American-style button mag release—in this case a big, textured steel button. (The original PPQ, which is still available, has the European-style paddle release along the bottom of the trigger guard.)

I've read in several places that the magazine release button is reversible, and Walther describes it as ambidextrous. In fact, it's neither. It's replaceable. The pistol ships with the typical left-side button installed. But if you're a lefty, you can swap that out for the right-side button Walther includes with the gun. Simple instructions for doing this are on page 30 of the owner's manual.



Art Direction by Heather Ferro

BIG BROTHER

The PPQ M2 in .45 ACP has been upsized to accommodate the larger cartridge. It has a 4.25-inch barrel, an overall length of 7.4 inches and a height of 5.8 inches. It is far larger than what most people will be willing or able to conceal, but due to the polymer construction

of the frame, it is much lighter than many .45s.

Unloaded with an empty magazine in place, it tips the scales at 28 ounces. Most Government Model 1911s start at 36 ounces with no magazine, and if you want a tactical rail on your 1911 frame like

12-round magazine (where legal), and two magazines are provided with the pistol. The magazines have polymer basepads that flare slightly at the bottom, which helps if you have to strip a stuck magazine out the bottom of the frame. The magazines are made by Mec-Gar and have numbered index holes at the 4-, 7-, 10- and 12-round marks.

The Walther's barrel has an integral feed ramp that is polished at the factory and features polygonal rifling. Most European pistols have this type of rifling, rather than

the Walther has, you'd add at least

The pistol is fed by a steel

another three ounces.

avoid a bulged barrel.

The PPQ M2's slide has a distinctive look. It's narrow at the top with curved sides, and the top of the slide is serrated. Originally, this was done on custom 1911s ostensibly to reduce glare, but this explanation has always seemed a bit disingenuous to me. If you're looking through the sights you can't see the top of the side. However, I do agree that serrating the top of a slide on a semiauto makes it look sexy and classy.

traditional lands and grooves, and the only downside to it is the prohibition against firing lead bullets to

The pistol has flat-bottomed slide serrations front and rear that work nicely. Both the slide and the barrel have a corrosion-resistant matte black Tenifer coating.

The PPQ M2 has the ubiquitous three-dot setup, which works just fine. The rear sight is adjustable for windage via a screw in the right side. My only complaint about the sights is they are plastic, and I have no faith they'll still be on the pistol if it is dropped upside down or whacked on a doorframe while walking through it. I've done that more times than I can count.

Both HK and Walther engineers are fans of Archimedes's quote, "Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and



■ The big news is the bigger cartridge. Walther chambering the all-American .45 ACP for the first time tells you the company is serious about the U.S. market.



▲ The PPQ M2 has a narrow, serrated slide top that flares toward the base. It has cocking serrations fore and aft and an accessory rail.

ACCURACY RESULTS | WALTHER PPQ M2 Muzzle Standard .45 ACP Weight (gr.) Group (in.) Velocity (fps) **Deviation** Black Hills JHP 185 967 14 2.0 Federal Hydra-Shok JHP 230 851 19 1.9 Hornady XTP + P 230 896 19 1.9 SIG Elite FMJ 230 822 18 2.0 American Eagle FMJ 230 845 22 2.3

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

I shall move the world." Modern European semiautos, including the PPQ M2, have extraordinarily long slide stops. Even though it doesn't protrude far from the frame at all, just a touch on the end of the PPQ's ambidextrous slide stop will send it forward, and you can easily drop the slide on an empty magazine.

European gun companies also seem to be fans of huge trigger guards on duty pistols. Considering how cold it gets there in winter, this isn't a big surprise. You'll have more than enough room inside the trigger guard of the PPQ M2 to fit a gloved finger. The trigger guard is square with a slight hook and has serrations on its face.

The PPQ M2's frame has subtle finger grooves and texturing. After being spoiled by the hand-stippled frames of my own carry guns, I found myself wishing the PPQ M2's texturing was more aggressive. It's not slick, but it definitely could be a little more "grippier."

The original 9mm and .40 S&W PPQs and PPQ M2s came with three interchangeable backstraps. As the grip of the .45 ACP PPQ M2 is already bigger, it comes with only two backstraps. The factory-installed Small basically equates to what would be Medium on the 9mm and .40. The Large puts extra material underneath the web of your hand.

Unlike most polymer-framed pistols, the serial number isn't on the underside of the frame near the tactical rail but is instead on the rear of the frame just below the slide. And in typical German fashion, the serial number can also be found on the barrel hood and on the side of the slide just underneath the ejection port.

In case you're wondering what all the markings on the slide and barrel mean, the "CIP" over the "N" on the barrel and slide (and even on the frame, although it's small and hard to see) is the mark of the proof house, as is the stag antler. The stag antler is the symbol of the CIP-accredited Beschussamt Ulm proof house that pressure-tests all the Walther firearms in Germany. CIP establishes pressure standards for cartridges and is the European equivalent of our SAAMI.

If you want to know what year your PPQ M2 was manufactured, it's there as well. On the slide you'll see a DE, indicating the pistol was made in Deutschland (that's Germany to those of you too young to have been raised on World War II movies). To the right of that is a BF. Using Walther's number system where A = 0 (and B = 1, C = 2, etc.) BF = 15, meaning this pistol was manufactured in 2015.

Every time I've written up a PPQ or a PPQ M2 I've mentioned that these Walthers have the best trigger pulls of any available full-size striker-fired gun on the market. (I have to add the caveat "full-size" now because the trigger on the compact Ruger LC9s is perhaps the best on any striker-fired gun—period.) Every PPQ M2 .45 I've shot so far has continued this trend, with crisp light trigger pulls that seemed no heavier than the advertised 5.6-pound pull.

The trigger pull on the test gun Walther sent me measured 4.25 pounds, with perhaps a quarterinch of take-up before a crisp break. This is freaking fabulous. The trigger itself is pivoting and has a flat, serrated face. There is a safety lever on the face of the trigger.

This past summer I injured the web of my right hand badly enough that for a week simply holding a pistol hurt, forget shooting. It just so happened that less than two weeks after my injury I attended a media event where I had the opportunity to shoot a lot of new pistols, including the Walther PPQ in .45. Every shot caused me pain, but it was a great learning experience.

I found that with my injury I was unable to fire more than a few shots out of any steel-framed gun or

WALTHER ARMS

PPQ M2

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: .45 ACP

CAPACITY: 12+1 (where legal)

BARREL: 4.35 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.4/5.8/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 28 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: polymer frame

FINISH: matte black

SIGHTS: plastic 3-dot, windage adjustable

rear

TRIGGER: 4.25 lb. pull (as tested)

PRICE: \$699

MANUFACTURER: Walther, Walther Arms.com



☐ The pistol features an elongated slide stop, and the resulting leverage makes it easy to operate even though it doesn't protrude much. Tarr thinks the PPQ M2 has the best full-size striker-fired trigger on the market.

BIG BROTHER

← any compact gun chambered in .45 ACP. The recoil hurt my hand too much. I couldn't comfortably shoot a .45 ACP 1911, but I was able to shoot the .45 ACP PPQ M2. This was very interesting, as the average 1911 has at least half a pound more recoil-absorbing weight in its design than the Walther. Even so, the Walther was more pleasant to shoot.

I attribute this to two things:

frame material and bore height. Frame material is a no-brainer. Polymer flexes and absorbs some of the recoil forces; metal does not.

I'm normally the first guy to advocate for pistol bores set lower to the hand. Lower bores mean less muzzle rise, but lower bores also mean more of the recoil forces are directed straight back into the web of your hand. If you have a strong, healthy hand, this is not a problem. If you have an injury or arthritis, this can hurt.

When shooting the PPQ M2.45 I found I was getting a bit more muzzle flip compared to a 1911, which has a lower bore axis, but that increased muzzle flip translated into less force going back into my hand—and less pain. Not a huge difference, but a difference nonetheless.

Most people aren't shooting with injured hands, but many people suffer from joint pain. If you're one of them—or if you're recoil sensitive—and have wanted a .45 ACP, the Walther PPQ M2 may be for you.

Taking the pistol apart reveals how the Walther engineers managed to tame the recoil of the .45 ACP cartridge. They added weight to the slide. The slide alone, minus barrel and recoil spring system, weighs a pound. The frame itself weighs almost nothing.

This is why I laugh whenever I see custom striker-fired polymer-framed guns with stylish cutouts in the slide. While they may look cool, they were designed by people who don't shoot enough to know any better. The last thing you want to do on a gun like this is remove weight from the slide. It's the only thing keeping recoil manageable.

Walther provided a test target with the pistol. At 15 meters the company shooter put five rounds into a 1.25-inch group. There was no indication as to what ammunition was used, but a crisp, light trigger helps wring the utmost in accuracy out of a pistol no matter what ammo you're using.

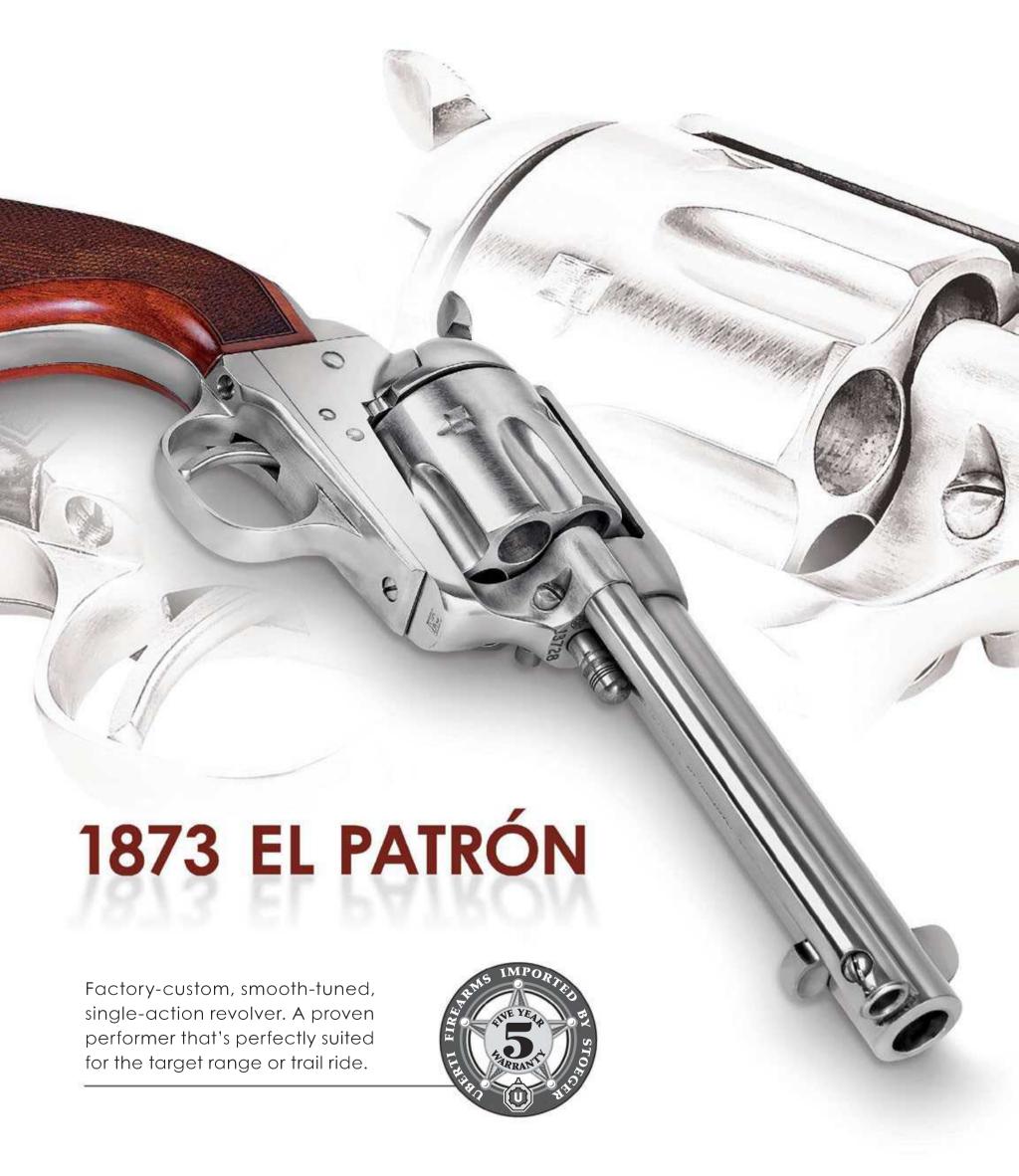
At 25 yards the Walther was boringly accurate, averaging two-inch groups off sandbags. The trigger pull was light and short enough that it didn't slow me down when I really wanted to hammer the targets. The PPQ M2 in .45 ACP not only was nicely accurate, but also was completely reliable and a heck of a lot of fun to shoot.



■ While the magazine button isn't an ambi or reversible, you can replace the one that comes on the gun, which is for righties, with a supplied button meant for southpaws.



▲ Even though it has a higher bore axis than, say, a 1911, the recoil forces aren't directed straight back into your hand. That and the polymer frame make this a super comfortable .45 to shoot.











BY PATRICK SWEENEY

RUGER'S NEWEST REDHAWK GIVES YOU THE CHOICE OF .45 ACP OR .45 COLT IN ONE REVOLVER.

kay, we've all seen the Redhawk. Big, brawny and tough as they come. But Ruger has made bigger revolvers; the Super Redhawk comes to mind. And Ruger has done multi-caliber revolvers before as well with its interchangeable-cylinder Blackhawk and Super Blackhawk. But the new .45 Colt/.45 ACP Redhawk is the company's first multi-caliber double-action revolver. And, no, I'm

not counting the .357 Magnum/.38 Special.

The Redhawk design was unveiled in 1980, when I was new in the gun business. At the time, it was the biggest .44 Magnum revolver to be had—tough, strong and so big it was just a hunting gun. It has been in production ever since, even though Ruger itself has produced bigger, stronger revolvers that have pushed the Redhawk back into the middle of the pack.

DUAL THREAT

← Introducing a dual-chambered, single-cylinder revolver took finesse, and the new Redhawk is a bit different from other Redhawks. The barrel is 4.2 inches long, in order for it to be legal in Canada, where a handgun has to have a barrel of at least 100 millimeters to pass muster. And 4.2 inches is 106.68 millimeters.

The sights are the usual Ruger sights, a red insert blade on the front, held in place by means of a spring-loaded detent. The rear is the Ruger adjustable sight, with a white outline around the notch.

The grips and grip shape are different. The grip frame has a definite round-butt shape to it, without being a cut-down or too-small grip meant more for concealment than actual handling and aiming.

The wood grips follow the frame contour, so there is no filler behind the trigger guard. But that's good. It gives us a chance to try the gun as is and then change if we feel the need. It keeps the contour smooth,

compact (relatively speaking) and unlikely to catch on things. All this comes in a Ruger plastic case, with moon clips, lock, manual and fired cartridge case.

The cylinder has to be long enough to handle .45 Colt ammunition, but at the same time it has to be able to properly support and position .45 ACP. That means the .45 ACPs have what amounts to a long freebore before they encounter the chamber throats of the .45 Colt chambers.

That's one issue. Another is figuring out how to hold the .45 ACPs in position. The obvious solution is the century-old moon clip, but obvious doesn't mean it's easy to implement. There's a small problem in that you have to accommodate the narrow rim of the .45 Colt and still be able to handle the moon clips.

Ruger solved the problem, but the Redhawk pays for this versatility by giving up a different versatility. A revolver set up for .45 ACP alone can use moon clips, it can use the .45 Auto Rim, and it can use .45 ACP without moon clips—although in the latter case you need something to poke out the empties.

The Redhawk dual .45, however, is a moon clip or nothing at all proposition. If you have .45 ACP ammo but no moon clips, you don't have a functional revolver. However, to me that seems a small price to pay for what you get.

Let's look at it first as a .45 ACP revolver. It is big and heavy for being a .45 ACP. You can get other revolvers that are lighter, but with the Redhawk you don't have to worry about it being tough enough. If you reload, you can use the lightest .45 ACP loads in the books, Bullseye loads, and spit 185-grain bullets downrange in the low 700 fps range. This makes the Redhawk a great big stainless plinker.

On the other end, the theoretical strength of the Redhawk is far



▲ One gun, two cartridges. The Redhawk employs moon clips to load .45 ACP while .45 Colt loads are stuffed in the cylinders in conventional fashion—by hand or speedloader.

ACCURACY RESULTS RUGER REDHAWK						
Cartridge	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)		
.45 ACP						
Hornady TAP + P	200	832	21.6	2.5		
Asym Bonded	230	741	10.6	2.0		
SIG V-Crown	230	778	14.6	2.5		
Winchester Defend JHP	230	765	8.5	2.5		
.45 COLT						
Winchester PDX-1	225	824	16.4	2.5		
Winchester Silvertip	225	752	20.1	3.0		
Magtech Lead Flat Nose	250	610	37.2	3.5		

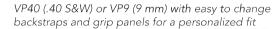
Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups at 25 yards off a Sinclair front shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a LabRadar chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



From the company that pioneered the first striker fired and polymer pistols more than forty years ago comes the reset the industry has been waiting for. The Heckler & Koch VP Series has all of the features that you're looking for in a handgun. VP pistols use HK's ergonomic handgun grip design that includes changeable backstraps and grip side panels — accommodating all hand sizes. Only HK handguns have such a personalized grip.

The VP trigger surpasses those found on competitors and has been widely hailed as a ground-breaking component. It has a short, light take-up with a solid, single action type break followed by a short positive reset. Add in features like controls that are completely ambidextrous, HK's patented charging supports for better gripping to rack the slide rearward, and a cold hammer forged polygonal barrel made from cannon grade steel and you can see why this is a "No Compromise" pistol.

All at a remarkable price and backed by Heckler & Koch's legendary German quality and an exceptional lifetime warranty.











DUAL THREAT

in excess of the .45 ACP. So you can load your .45 ACP ammo right up to the limit of +P power and still have plenty of extra strength to depend on. In essence, the entire range of .45 ACP power is available to you, in ammo that will work just fine in your revolver.

And then we have .45 Colt. You can have fun with cowboy-level loads—a 250-grain soft lead flatpoint at less than 700 fps. These are available from many ammo companies because lot of cowboy competitors are more interested in fashion than in reloading, and they

For someone living in the backcountry, the Redhawk can be a serious trail gun, and it can be a travel-to-"civilization" concealed-carry gun.

You can also load bullets in .45 ACP that your 1911 might have trouble with. One that comes to mind is a heavyweight: the old 265-grain flatpoint, which Lyman has made molds for since Elmer Keith designed the bullet. I cast and loaded those back when pin-shooting was new, and they broomed pins off the tables with gusto. With their coffee-can meplats they were also particular about what 1911s they'd work in. I don't see that being a problem in the Redhawk.

buy only as much ammo as they need to actually shoot in the matches. (Hey, it's true. Cowboy action is as much period-correct costuming as it is firearms competition.)

At the other end of the Colt spectrum is the so-called .45 Colt +P. Ruger does not give its blessing for this loading in the Redhawk. The company's problem with the .45 Colt +P is simple: There is no SAAMI spec for it. Basically, .45 Colt +P is whatever the ammunition company (or you) settles on as

"The .45 ACP +P is fine," Ruger product manager Kurt Hindle told me. "There is no SAAMI specification for .45 Colt +P, though, so because there is no specification,

That's certainly a prudent approach, and I can't argue with it. However, it is possible to load heavy-hitting .45 Colt ammo that is not +P. Vihtavuori, Accurate and others list load data for 255-grain cast bullets from 900 fps to just over 1,000 fps, and they're within the SAAMI pressure specifications for .45 Colt.

an "acceptable" pressure level.

there is no upper pressure limit,

and we cannot say it is fine."

The dual nature of the Redhawk brings up interesting possibilities. For someone living in the back-country, the Redhawk can be a serious trail gun, and it can be a travel-to-"civilization" concealed-carry gun.

Yes, it will be a bit light for, say, bears since it isn't a .475, .480 or one of the .500s. But it will be lighter and easier to wear, and a .45 Colt loaded with heavy, hard-cast bullets pumped to published maximum loads is not exactly an inconsequential bear cartridge. Going into town, loaded with .45 ACP, it will be a bit on the heavy side, as it will be at least a half-pound heavier than an all-steel 1911, if half a pound matters to you.

In testing the Redhawk, I



△ Due to the design challenges of accommodating both a moon clip and the thin rim of the .45 Colt, the Redhawk is a moon clip or nothing proposition if you're using ACP ammunition. Those rounds can't be single loaded like they can in other ACP-chambered revolvers.

RUGER REDHAWK

TYPE: DA/SA revolver
CALIBER: .45 ACP/.45 Colt

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 4.2 in.

OAL/WIDTH: 9.5/1.2 in.

WEIGHT: 44 oz.
FINISH: stainless steel
GRIPS: lasered hardwood

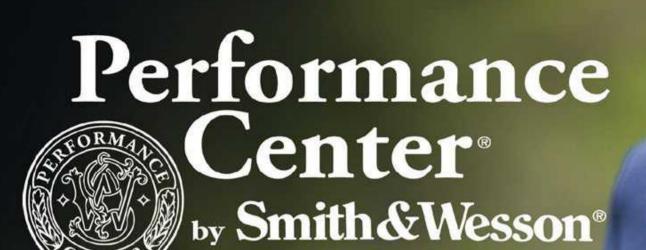
SIGHTS: adjustable red-ramp front; white

outline rear

TRIGGER: 3.5 lb., SA; 12 lb., DA

PRICE: \$1,029

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM



PERFORMANCE THE WAY YOU LIKE IT

Model SW1911 Custom 5" Barrel • 8+1 Rounds .45 ACP

Model SW1911 Custom 4.25" Barrel • 8+1 Rounds .45 ACP Smith & Wesson Performance Center Pistols are the best choice when it comes to competition.

Each custom pistol is Performance Center Tuned and Inspected. Make your next choice a #Performance Center SW1911.

Doug Koenig 13 Time Bianchi Cup Champion Member of Team Smith & Wesson



DUAL THREAT

had to decide on what kinds of ammo to use. I settled on the light to top-end .45 ACP power range, as I'm not going to encounter many bears in the Midwest, plus I didn't have time to load up heavy hitters in .45 Colt.

The first Colt load I tried—the cowboy 250-grain flatpoint from Magtech—was so soft in recoil that had I not seen the impact on the backstop I would have thought I'd had a bullet lodged in the bore. The recoil was soft enough that if you have a new shooter with hands big enough to hold the Redhawk, he or she will have no problems having fun shooting the gun.

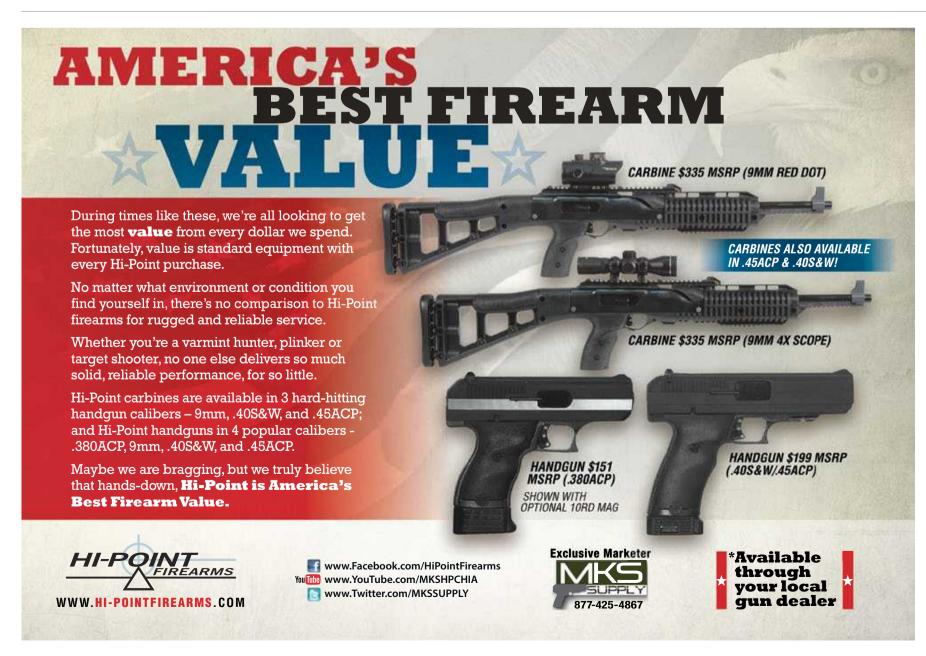
My starting point for ACP loads

☐ The laser-checkered stocks of the Redhawk follow the contour of the round-butt frame. It's on the small side but doesn't feel like a cut-down grip like you might find on a CCW gun. these days is Winchester Train & Defend, where you can have both a practice load (Train) and a matching in velocity and recoil defensive load (Defend), the latter a 230-grain jacketed hollowpoint at a moderate velocity.

Moving up, there's the Winchester PDX-1, which is an FBI-passing bullet, and there's a step up in recoil to go with it. But if you figure you might be working around cars or in buildings and need a handgun, this will work like a champ through intervening obstacles.

In mulling over the possibilities, I can see another way you can use the dual nature of this revolver. You can carry the Redhawk with your favorite .45 ACP load in moon clips and have a speedloader on your belt with stout .45 Colt hard-cast loads.

You've got the jacketed hollow-



points—vehicle-solving ones at that—in the .45 ACPs. And if you find your six rounds of .45 ACP have not solved the problem and now your threat is using a vehicle for cover, those Colt hard-cast bullets will penetrate.

When I was shooting revolver in IPSC competition, we did everything we could to improve reloading speed. The Redhawk has a few sharp edges in the extractor ratchet and chambers areas. Jacketed hollowpoints especially will catch on the edge of the chambers and not drop in smoothly. This isn't uncommon, but we expect a moon-clipped revolver to load like greased lightning. A small bit of stoning knocks off the edges and speeds up reloads a lot.

The Redhawk's trigger pull is nice in single action but a bit heavy and stagey in double action. A competent gunsmith should be able

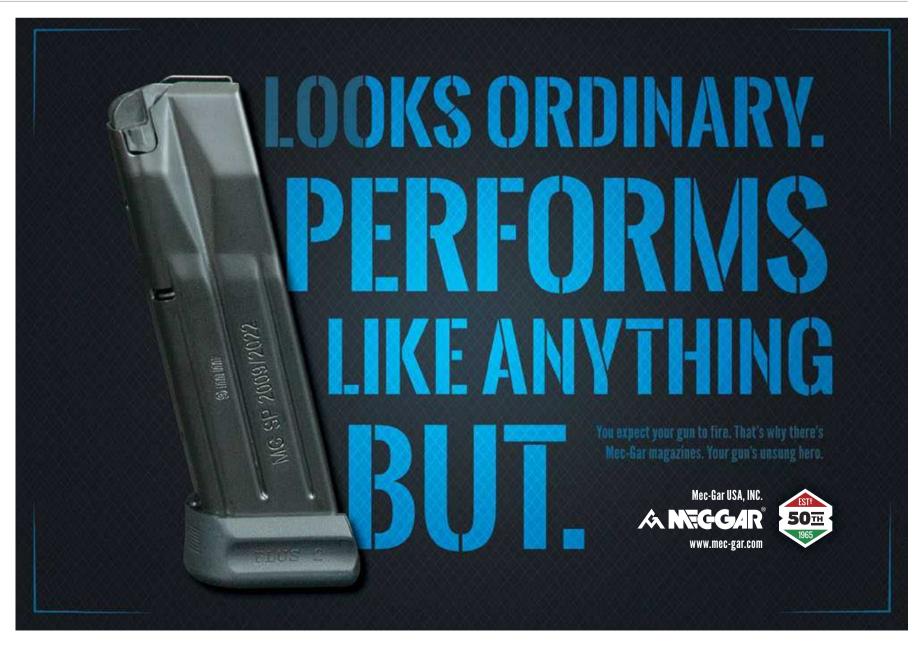
to smooth the bearing surfaces of the clockwork and slick it up, which would make double-action shooting a lot faster and smoother—even without lightening the pull.

Ruger has been on a tear lately, making self-loading pistols that hold half a box of ammo in the magazine, but it is nice to see the company can still surprise us in the revolver field, even if that market isn't as big as it used to be.

When it comes to power, pistols can't beat revolvers. And here we have our choice of power, across the entire spectrum, from soft plinking ammo to serious defensive performers and a wide choice of ammo across two different chamberings.

▶ Full-power .45 ACP loads—this group was with the Asym—proved to be very accurate in the Redhawk. The Colt loads were only slightly less accurate.

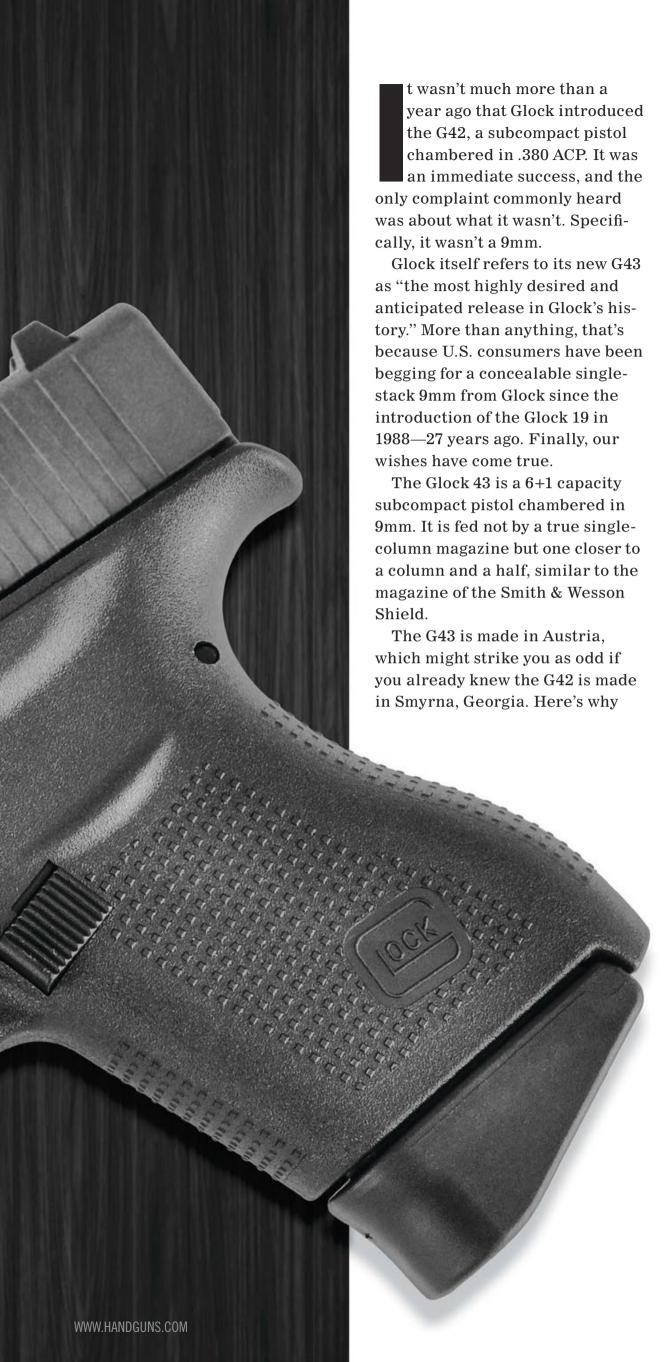




AGLOCK THAT CONTROL CONTROL

BY JAMES TARR

WITH THE G43 AMERICAN SHOOTERS FINALLY GET THE SINGLE-STACK (SORTA) 9MM THEY'VE ALWAYS WANTED.



the G43 is an overseas gun. All foreign-made handguns must earn a minimum 75 points under ATF regulations to be legal to import, the points based on characteristics and features such as size, weight, caliber and number of safeties (the legal basis for this is found in Title 18, Section 925 of the U.S. Code, in case you're curious; if you want to see the actual worksheet, check out ATF's Form 4590).

The smaller the handgun, the less likely it is to make the cut. The .380 ACP Glock 42 didn't make the cut and thus had to be manufactured in the U.S. But the Glock 43 does qualify, so it is made overseas, and that's why the G43 has a "target"—i.e., grooved—trigger because it earns the gun more points with the ATF.

Due to the G43's size it does not come with the interchangeable backstraps seen on the larger Gen 4 Glocks. That said, it does not feel tiny in the hand, as the G42 did, but it does feel small.

While the G43 has similar proportions to the .380 ACP G42, it has to be larger to accommodate the physically larger 9mm cartridge and the accompanying higher pressures. However, Glock engineers have made it as small as physically possible within the constraints of their pistol design.

Barrel length is 3.39 inches, and at 6.26 inches overall length, the G43 is just .32 inch longer than the G42. At 4.25 inches tall, it is a mere 0.12 inch taller than the G42. At 1.02 inches wide it is 0.08 inch broader than the G42.

Where you'll notice the biggest difference with the new G43 is on the scale. The 9mm Luger operates at substantially higher pressures than the .380 ACP, and as a result Glock has added a lot of weight to the slide to help tame the recoil. At 17.95 ounces unloaded, the G43 is more than five ounces (32 percent) heavier than the G42.

Compact and subcompact guns are harder to shoot because

THE GLOCK THAT ROCKS

they recoil more and are harder to hold onto. Glock calls the G43 a subcompact, but to me a true subcompact auto fits easily into a pocket. The G43 is a little big for most pockets. Size-wise, I would say the Glock 43 splits the difference between subcompact and compact.

To help shooters hold on, the frame has been textured with small raised squares. While this frame is

not as aggressively textured as fullsize Gen 4 Glocks, these squares are more functional than they look, and the gun won't slip in your hand unless your palms are really sweaty.

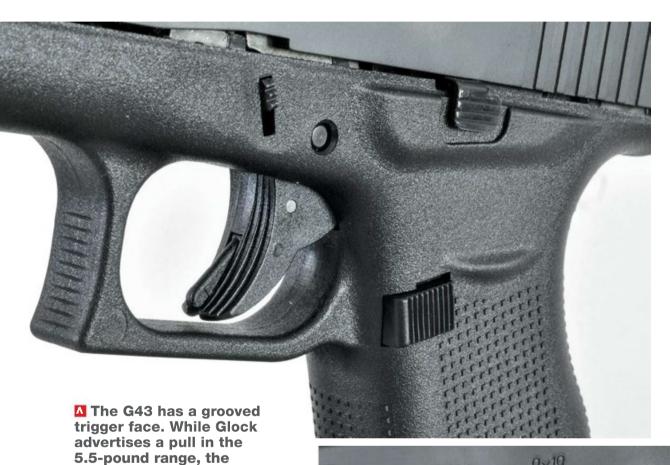
The frame has a small beavertail to help reduce the chances of slide bite on guys with big hands. The magazine release is the larger rectangular version seen on Gen 4 Glocks. I like that the magazine release is nearly flush with the side of the frame and protrudes only at the front as the frame curves inward. This design means the chances of accidentally dropping a magazine because you've got big hands or as the pistol bounces around in a pocket or purse are very low.

The sights are pure factory Glock, which means a white dot front sight and a white outline rear notch, both made of plastic. The sight picture they provide is functional, but plastic sights on any type of gun are a bad idea. And on a gun that is likely to spend a lot of time in a pocket or purse, polymer sights are twice as dumb.

Glock provides two six-round magazines with the pistol—one with a flush base pad and one with an extended base pad—which should allow just about everybody to get all their fingers on the gun.

Glock makes +2 basepads for its other models, so I am perplexed why the company didn't take the opportunity of the G43's extended base pad to add a few more rounds. Glock pretty much set the standard

V.HANDGUNS.COM



AUSTRIA

The G43 comes with a flush-fit and extended base pad magazine. While the latter does provide a better grip, it doesn't increase capacity.

author's sample measured 7.25 pounds, which is fine

for a pocket gun.

ACCURACY RESULTS | GLOCK 43

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Sig Elite FMJ	115	1,056	14	3.2
Black Hills JHP	124	1,050	14	2.9
Hornady American Gunner + P	124	1,033	11	3.8
Hornady XTP	147	955	11	3.5

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph set 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

in auto pistols for maximum capacity, but the G43's 6+1 capacity is par at best.

The G43 disassembles in exactly the same way as every other Glock on the market. Pulling it apart, you'll see internally it looks like every other Glock model as well, although most of its parts are not interchangeable with any other model. The G43 sports a dual recoil spring to help tame recoil, and it has been tested with +P ammunition.

Glock advertises that the G43—like every other pistol it makes with its standard 5.5-pound connector—has a trigger pull in the neighborhood of 5.5 pounds. And as usual the firm is misrepresenting the truth. It is rare to find a Glock with a trigger pull even close to six pounds, and my Glock 43 sample provided a typical Glock trigger pull of 7.25 pounds as measured at the bottom third of the trigger.

While writing this article, I was talking to a firearms trainer with the Chicago police department, and he told me the department has to test every new gun Glock sends to make sure they meet the department's five-pound minimum trigger pull. The trainer guessed he'd tested the trigger pulls of more than 200 Glocks (all with 5.5-pound connectors such as the one found in the G43), and they averaged 7.5 pounds. He couldn't remember if he'd ever measured one that



G43

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger **CAPACITY:** 6+1

BARREL: 3.39 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.26/4.25/1.02 in. **WEIGHT:** 17.95 oz. (w/o magazine)

FRAME: polymer

SIGHTS: plastic; dot front, white outline rear

TRIGGER: Safe Action; 7.25 lb. pull

(measured) PRICE: \$530

MANUFACTURER: Glock, GLOCK.US





GLOCK 43 ACCESSORIES

Almost as soon as the Glock 43 was announced, many accessory manufacturers had parts available for it. In many cases the manufacturers had, like most Glock fans, been waiting 20 years for Glock to produce a single-stack 9mm, so there were all sorts of ideas on the drawing board. By the time this article comes out, there will be no shortage of holsters available for the 43, and while many people might think of the G43 as a pocket gun, there will be just as many looking for a good IWB holster for it.

Let me talk about two specific accessories that I feel offer the most value to the new G43 owner but which may not receive a lot of attention.

TTI (TARANTACTICALINNOVATIONS.COM) offers +1 and +2 Firepower base pads for the G43's magazines. The extended floorplate magazine provided by Glock with the pistol is great if you want to get all of your fingers on the gun but does nothing to increase capacity. The +2 TTI base pad protrudes the same distance from the magazine as the Glock extended floorplate but gives you an 8+1 capacity. The +1 base pad extends only a hair farther from the magazine than the flush Glock baseplate. The base pads are machined from billet aluminum and are easy to install and add only a tiny bit of weight. The G43 +1 Firepower base pad retails for \$30 and the +2 for \$35.

Ghost Inc. (GHOSTINC.COM) has two improved trigger connectors for the G43. The Edge reduces the trigger pull of the pistol by several pounds. It is a simple drop-in part, and if you can take apart your Glock for cleaning, you have the skills to install this connector. The Pro offers an overtravel stop in addition to the reduced pull weight, but it will need to be fitted.

If you plan to carry the G43 in a holster (and you absolutely should), shaving two pounds off the trigger pull will definitely improve your shooting. The great thing about connectors is that they're inexpensive. The Edge connector for the G43 sells for \$25, and the Pro is \$35.—JT

— was under seven pounds. Don't get me wrong: I think a trigger pull in the seven-pound range is perfectly acceptable on a subcompact pistol with no manual safety.

When it comes to shooting the G43, it does have a bit more recoil than what you'll get out of the larger models. I noticed a bit more muzzle flip than recoil back into my hand, especially when shooting using the magazine with extended base pad. I could get my whole hand on the gun with that mag in place, but the recoil forces in that lighter gun have to go somewhere, so the muzzle goes up. Or at least that's my theory.

In short, a Glock is a Glock is a



The sights are pure stock Glock, and Tarr dislikes their plastic construction. But he does like the beavertail, which can prevent bite for those with larger hands.

Glock. Only the caliber, capacity and proportions change. The only new feature on the G43 is the small beavertail. Glock should put it on all of its pistols, but I wouldn't hold my breath on that one.

I found the Glock 43 more comfortable to hold and shoot than the short and fat Baby Glocks (G26 and G27). It feels like a small but proportional version of a full-size gun, whereas the G26/27 feel butchered and the G42 feels a little too small to me—and I don't have big hands.

Looking at the specs of the G43, you will see it is similar in size and weight to the S&W M&P Shield. The Shield was the last compact 9mm pistol to get this much press and attention, so it seems fair to compare them. What does the Glock offer that the Shield does not?

I have a 9mm Shield and did a little side-by-side comparison. The Shield is a hair shorter in length, half an inch taller and weighs an ounce more. Holding them together, it's hard to notice much difference in size.

Whereas the G43 is a 6+1, the flush magazine of the Shield holds seven rounds, and with the flush seven-round magazine, the Shield is shorter than the Glock with its extended six-round magazine in place.



▲ The G43 exhibited a bit more bit more recoil than muzzle flip, especially when shooting using the magazine with extended base pad.

I've had my Shield for more than two years, and it's never malfunctioned, so it is on par with Glock's reputation for reliability. The Glock has a lower bore, but it does not have less felt recoil than the Shield. In fact, I felt it had a bit more. I thought the Glock felt a bit nicer in of its proportions, the G43 feels more like a full-size gun but the Shield shoots more like a full-size gun. While the G43 has more recoil than the Shield, the G43 still shoots like a Glock. If you have experience behind a Glock there will be absolutely no learning curve with the

If you like Glocks and are looking for a smaller, easy-to-conceal version, this is the Glock for you.

my hand and pointed more naturally, and it is slightly lighter and easier to conceal. However, the Shield has a crisper, lighter trigger pull at 6.5 pounds. Most importantly, both guns are fun to shoot and will not brutalize you like an Airweight .38 snubnose firing +P ammo does.

The Shield has slightly weird proportions; the G43 does not. Because

G43. The grip angle, controls, sights, etc., will all be the same.

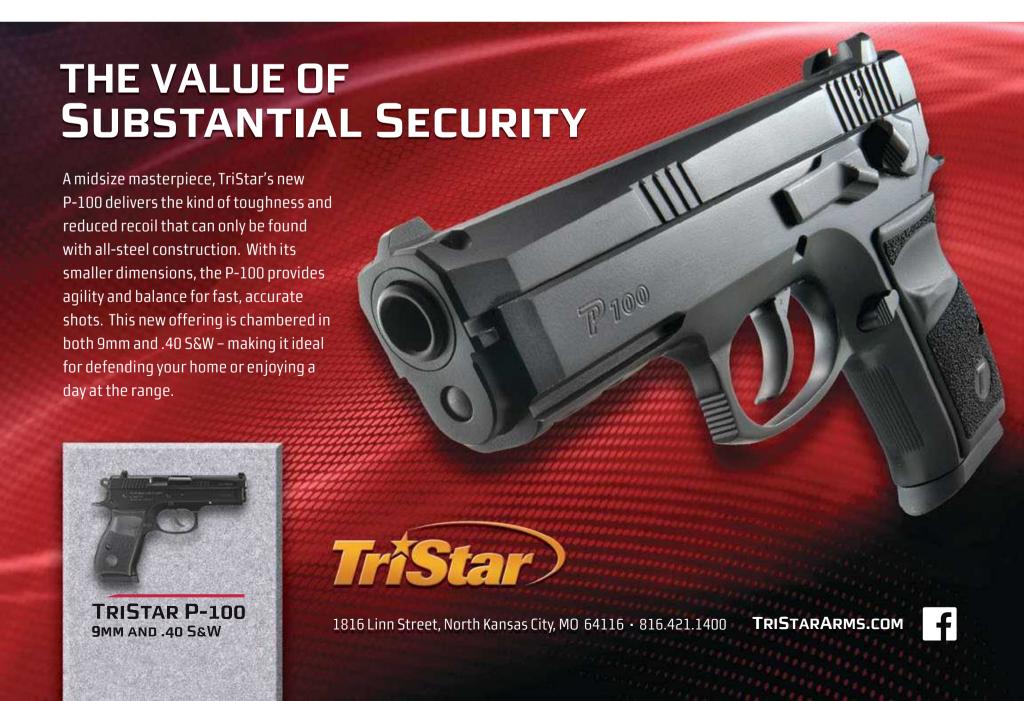
The Shield has steel three-dot sights, and the Glock is equipped with plastic sights, and I've already expressed my opinion about that. Both pistols come with two different magazines, flush and extended, although the Shield's extended magazine holds an extra round,

and the Shield starts off with a +1 advantage over the Glock.

And then there is price. The suggested retail price of the 9mm Smith & Wesson M&P Shield is \$80 less than the Glock. I like both guns—both are reliable and easy to carry and conceal—but near as I can tell, the only reason the G43 costs more than the M&P Shield is the name on the slide.

Like with any firearm purchase meant for self defense, narrow your choices down to guns that are well known for their reliability and pick the one that fits your needs and your hand best.

The G43 is a small, light, ultrareliable semiauto chambered in a serious cartridge that points naturally and is not difficult to shoot. If you like Glocks and are looking for a small, easy-to-conceal version of their full-size models, this is the Glock for you.





BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

CHRISTENSEN ARMS IS KNOWN AS A RIFLE COMPANY, BUT IT MAKES A PRETTY FINE 1911 AS WELL.



est known for its pioneering work in carbon fiber-wrapped rifle barrels, Christensen Arms, a little family-owned company, also produces a line of fine 1911s in its central Utah facility. Created one at a time, each pistol taken from start to finish by a single gunsmith, they're intended to rival toptier 1911s from legendary companies such as Les Baer, Ed Brown, Bill Wilson and Nighthawk Custom.

If there is a cutting-edge material or process available that contributes to the performance or quality of a pistol, it's in the company's DNA to exploit and, if possible, improve on it. Originally, all 1911s produced by Christensen Arms sported an ultra-light titanium frame inset with tungsten carbide rails for the stainless steel slide to ride on (tungsten carbide wears better than gall-susceptible titanium). Even full-blown tactical versions with light rails, threaded muzzles, beveled mag wells and so forth had titanium frames, making for rapturously light, heavy-horsepower fighting guns.

Unfortunately for shooters purchasing guns on workingman's salaries, titanium is expensive. Call it \$3,200 to \$3,800 expensive, depending on options. Throw a Damascus steel slide atop that titanium frame, and the price tops \$5,000. So in 2014 the company introduced a line of steel-frame 1911s. The addition of steel-frame



erably alleviate the pain of springing for one. And for shooters more sensitive to recoil than to a heavy pistol making their trousers sag past their muffin top, the steel-frame models also dampen recoil a bit compared to their titanium brothers.

I recently made a trip to Christensen Arms's Gunnison, Utah, manufacturing facility and had the opportunity to tour the plant before borrowing a brand-new Commander-size pistol for testing. At first blush and after deep scrutiny, it's a beautiful 1911. The stainless steel slide is superbly finished in black Cerakote and is fit with Trijicon three-dot night sights. Fish-scale custom slide serrations offer both an appearance reminiscent of carbon fiber and an outstanding purchase via its tightly machined scale pattern.

To improve reliability, the ejection port is lowered and flared. "CHRISTENSEN" is engraved on the left-side flat of the slide, and the company's distinctive ram's head logo graces the slide behind the rear serrations.

A 4.29-inch match-grade barrel is hand fit to the slide. There is no discernible play in the muzzle where it passes through the muzzle bushing, and although I pressed down quite firmly on the barrel's hood, it didn't display any give, either.

As for the slide itself, there's just a whisper of play between it and the frame rails, but I had to work to find it. As old-timers in the 1911 world tend to point out, a little play allows a 1911 to be reliable.

Machining and finish on the frame are as impressive as they are on the slide. The frontstrap is cut high beneath the rear of the trigger guard to enable a high, recoil-controlling grip, and both the frontstrap and the aluminum mainspring housing are cut with 30 lpi checkering. A beavertail grip safety with a "speed bump" to ensure positive disengagement is nicely fitted, and the ambidextrous thumb safety levers snap into and out of Safe with good, clean, positive clicks.

A crisp, adjustable skeletonized trigger drops the combat-type hammer, and it's adjustable, although I saw no need to tinker with it since it averaged three pounds, 14 ounces over a series of five measurements with a Lyman digital trigger gauge, with only about two ounces of variation. Company specs don't list the trigger length, but I suspect it's a medium.

On this sample Commander-size pistol at least, the bevel around the edges of the mag well is light. That's okay because this isn't a competition pistol. As is appropriate for a 1911 designed for duty or personal protection carry, the magazine release button is just high enough for positive function without being prone to catch on clothing and turn your fighting tool into a one-shooter.

With the slide locked back, the full-length recoil spring guide rod is evident, and interestingly, it's so snugly fit there's little play in it. The slide lock lever is a wide, extended version that is easy to activate.

A REAL STEEL

Black VZ grips offer an aggressive texture to aid grip with hands slippery from fear, sweat or, heaven forbid, blood. Some shooters will protest that such a biting surface would tear your hands up over the course of, say, a Gunsite 250 class, and perhaps that's true, but when the chips are down anything that will help me control recoil and hang onto my sidearm gets my vote.

The pistol is tightly built, and I had to press a bushing wrench into

CHRISTENSEN ARMS COMMANDER 1911

TYPE: 1911 **CALIBER:** .45 ACP **CAPACITY:** 8+1

BARREL: 3.29 in., stainless **OAL/WIDTH/HEIGHT:** 7.4/1.4/4.5 in.

WEIGHT: 34 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: stainless steel

GRIPS: black VZ G10 **SIGHTS:** three-dot tritium

TRIGGER: 3 lb., 14 oz. pull (measured) **SAFETY:** ambi thumb, grip w/memory bump

PRICE: \$2,395

MANUFACTURER: Christensen Arms,

CHRISTENSENARMS.COM

service to disassemble it. I've had other tight pistols break in to the point where I could tear them apart without a wrench, which I actually prefer, since I never carry a wrench in the field and I like to be able to field-strip a gun to clean and service it. I suspect this one will come apart just fine without a wrench after several hundred rounds are put through it.

After turning the barrel bushing and releasing the spring plug, push the slide rearward until the small tab on the slide lock lines up with the tiny circular cut in the bottom left side of the slide. Push the pin through from the right-hand side of the frame and draw the slide and all its guts forward off the frame. Then remove the recoil spring and guide rod. Turn the barrel bushing the other direction in the muzzle until the retention lug lines up with the gap below the barrel and work the bushing out.

In the case of a tight bushing like the one on the Christensen Arms 1911 Commander, it may be necessary to get the barrel itself moving forward in order to get the

△ The pistol features a beavertail grip safety with "speed bump"; skeletonized combat-type hammer; ambidextrous thumb safety levers; adjustable trigger; and broad, extended slide-lock lever.

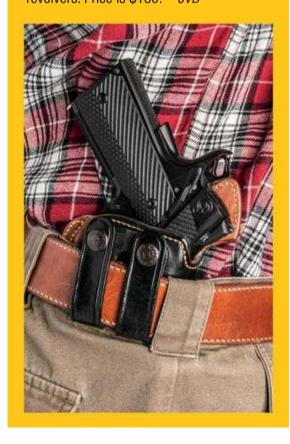
GALCO ROYAL GUARD IWB HOLSTER

I've worn a lot of handguns concealed in a lot of different holsters. During winter I like to carry full-size guns, and the only inside-the-waistband holster I've found that holds my handgun securely, positions it perfectly and is so comfortable that I can carry a 1911 Commander or Glock 17 all day long, day after day, is Galco's Royal Guard (GalcoGunLeather.com). My hip doesn't bruise, and the holster end doesn't pinch my derriere when sitting at my desk, in my truck or at a range bench.

Dual belt loops on the holster allow the wearer to sandwich a belt loop on their pants for added positional security if desired. And since they're fastened with snaps, they're easy to install and remove.

Made of horsehide, the Royal Guard is molded to the shape of your chosen pistol and offers a natural retention when in place between body and waistband. Horsehide wears better and retains its shape better than just about any other holster leather. A reinforcement band around the mouth of the Royal Guard enables easy one-handed holstering.

Finally, and importantly, the Royal Guard sets the holster at just the right cant, helping even big guns disappear against your body and presenting the gun ideally for a fast, clean draw. Royal Guards are available for a vast selection of pistols and revolvers. Price is \$130.—*JVB*





A REAL STEEL

bushing free. Fold the barrel link against the barrel, slide the barrel out of the slide, and you're done.

Reassemble in reverse order.

Like most 1911s, the Christensen



⚠ The grips are VZ G10, and the frontstrap and mainspring housing are checkered at 30 lines per inch. The magazine well is only slightly beveled.

Arms 1911 Commander feels good in the hands and points like a finger. I'll go so far as to say it feels great in my hands. I cut my semiauto wisdom teeth on 1911s, and few pistols feel so natural to me. Every once in a while I pick up a pistol that just feels particularly good, and this Christensen is one.

Although slight, the sharper edges and corners on the pistol have been knocked off or "dehorned" to minimize friction on clothing and skin. Plus, those edges will hold their finish a lot longer under extensive holster use than would a sharpedged version.

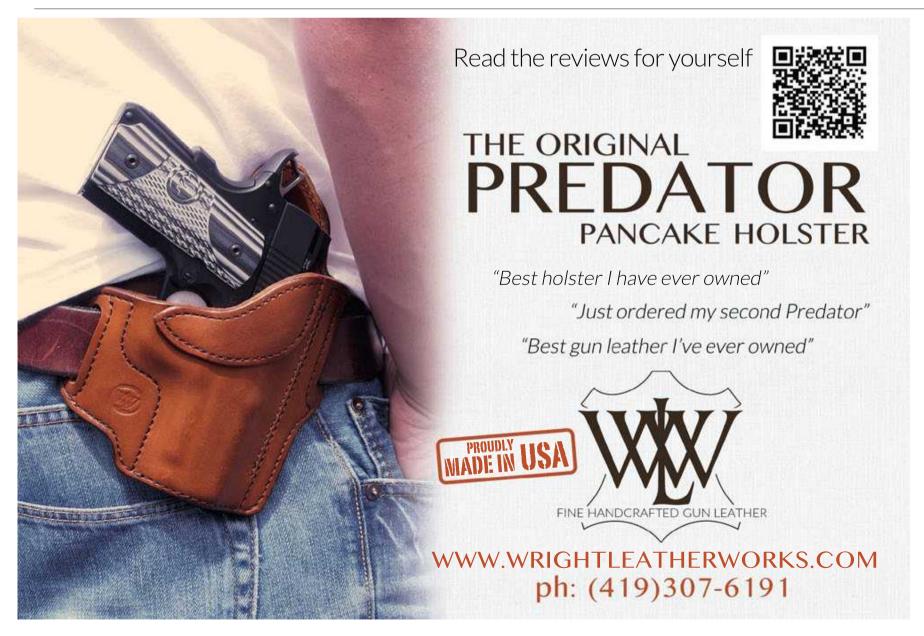
After photographing it, I stowed it inside my waistband in a Galco Royal Guard holster, loaded several boxes of factory ammo into my range bag, and headed out to shoot the 1911.

From 25 yards, I rested the Christensen Arms 1911 over a sandbag, shot a set of five five-round groups at 25 yards with each type of ammunition, and averaged the resulting groups. It displayed neither brilliant accuracy nor pickiness, averaging a completely acceptable 2.0 to 3.0 inches with all loads. Point of impact was two or three inches left (not a problem; either the front or rear

ACCURACY RESULTS | CHRISTENSEN ARMS COMMANDER

.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills Steel Case JHP	185	825	28	2.05
Hornady XTP +P	230	914	13	2.51
Winchester 1911 HP	230	883	12	2.86
Black Hills Steel Case FMJ	230	747	17	2.89

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocities are the averages of 10 rounds recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: HP, hollowpoint



sight can be drifted in its dovetail to correct) and about four inches high with all the 230-grain bullets. The 185-grain hollowpoint load impacted a bit left also, but perfectly in terms of elevation. Plus, of the various ammunition types, it produced the most accurate groups.

While examining the Christensen at the factory, I'd managed to misplace the magazine and leave without it, so I pirated an eight-round magazine from one of my 1911s for testing the gun.

When charging the magazine with five rounds for group shooting, the Christensen chugged through load after load without a single failure to feed and fire. But when I filled the magazine to capacity for running double taps, FBI drills and fromthe-holster work, I experienced a number of jams.

It shot beautifully with seven rounds in the mag, but not with eight, and it was entirely the magazine's fault because when I returned later with a different magazine, function was flawless. The only reason I even point this out is because it doesn't matter who made your pistol: If you're experiencing malfunctions, you must look at the mag first before blaming the gun.

Does the Christensen Arms 1911 compare with a pistol by Les Baer, Ed Brown, Bill Wilson, Nighthawk Custom and other premium 1911 manufacturers? For a sideline product from a company that really specializes in rifles rather than making 1911s as its primary focus, it comes pretty darn close. Fit and finish are superb. Feel and pointability are outstanding.

Getting one takes time—Christensen has a backlog of orders—but that's typical when custom ordering a fine 1911. Candidly, I don't think these pistols are going to take the handgunning world by storm. The company doesn't produce enough nor push them hard enough to join the big dogs in the premium 1911 world. However,

they're fine pistols that will go the distance, and they offer enthusiasts of Christensen's space-age hunting rifles a suitable sidearm of the same quality and manufacture.



⚠ The gun is fit with a full-length recoil spring guide rod. Sharp edges are slightly rounded to make for more comfortable carrying and use, and the fish-scale serration pattern offers a sure grip.



For a \$49.95 annual membership fee, Brownells *EDGE* offers these benefits:

- FREE Standard Shipping on all orders
- Discounted 2-Day & Overnight shipping
- **FREE** Shipping on returns
- Special members-only offers & discounts

Only \$49.95 a year!

Pays for itself in just 4 orders!

Sign up now at Brownells.com/EDGE or call 800-741-0015 and order #080-001-199





ilson Combat should be a name and company familiar to Handguns readers. Bill Wilson started selling custom 1911 parts at a time when such things were a rarity. But many people don't know (or have forgotten) the main reason why people initially trusted Bill Wilson's products is because he could actually walk the walk. As one of the best pistol shots in the country, using guns he worked on himself, Bill Wilson won numerous national and regional titles and represented us on the U.S. team at the International Practical Shooting Confederation World Shoot. So it was assumed, rightly so, he knew a little about making parts for the pistol.

Wilson Combat has continued to grow over the years, and Wilson has worked with well-known experts, including Ken Hackathorn, Paul Howe and Ernest Langdon. When I was starting out as a competitive shooter, Langdon was a top-tier U.S. Practical Shooting Association shooter. When the USPSA introduced Production division for stock semiauto pistols, Langdon quickly became known as the Beretta guy, and he soon had a national championship under his belt in addition to several International Defensive Pistol Association titles—all won using the Beretta 92.

Langdon expanded into tactical training and IDPA competition, where he met Wilson. Wilson has always liked the Beretta 92, but as issued it is not perfect, and competitive shooters like Wilson and Langdon are experts at improving pistols to make them more accurate and user-friendly. Last year Wilson Combat began offering aftermarket parts and gunsmithing packages for Berettas, and now we have the Wilson Combat Beretta 92G Brigadier Tactical, which features all sorts of upgrades.

"Being a serious Beretta collector, I have always considered the 92G Special Duty the best

DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016 HANDGUNS 59

A TACTICAL 92

← model ever produced, but almost too expensive and rare to shoot," Wilson said. "I feel fortunate to have been able to work with the fine people at Beretta USA to produce a pistol that, in my opinion, is an improved 92G SD."

It's important to note here that this is a limited-edition pistol. Originally, there were plans to sell only 1,000 units, but two months after its introduction, Bill Wilson told me the project had already exceeded his wildest dreams.

"We've already sold the initial 1,000 and have an additional 1,500 on order," he said. They all have special serial numbers as well, starting with WC. They are offered only in 9mm. [Ed. note: At press

WILSON COMBAT BERETTA 92G BRIGADIER TACTICAL

TYPE: DA/SA hammer-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 15+1 (where legal)

BARREL: 4.7 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.25/5.5/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 36 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Bruniton-finished alumi-

num frame and steel slide

SIGHTS: white-outline tritium front, notch

Battlesight rear

TRIGGER: DA, 11 lb. pull; SA, 5.75 lb. pull

SAFETY: firing pin block, decocker

PRICE: \$1,195

MANUFACTURER: Beretta USA

SELLER: Wilson Combat, WILSON COMBAT.COM

time, the Wilson Combat website indicated the pistol was out of stock, but the company is accepting back orders.]

If you're a fan of the Beretta 92, the first thing you'll probably notice is the shorter barrel on this pistol. That's because the Brigadier model sports a 4.7-inch barrel, which barely protrudes past the front of the slide. The standard militaryissue Beretta M9 (the government-contract, standard Model 92) has a five-inch barrel.

The slide profile is a little different as well, wider than the original 92 with an even more beefed-up area about 3/4 inch forward of the breech face. That section of the slide (relieved for barrel lockup) is the weakest, and the military and others who put extremely high numbers of rounds through the gun often saw slide cracking in that area. Wilson's strengthening of this area should prevent any problems if you're a high-volume shooter.

Slide to frame to barrel fit on my sample was excellent. There was a slight amount of play between the slide and the front of the frame, but the barrel was rock solid. The "G" designation indicates the ambidextrous (all steel) lever on the slide is a decocker only, not a safety, and it will not remain in the down position. The main complaint of the Beretta's traditional decocking safety



▲ Together with the Brunitonfinished slide and frame, the Dirty Olive G10 grips make the Brigadier Tactical the best-looking Model 92 out there.

is that users can accidentally engage the safety while racking the slide. This is not a problem with the G.

My first exposure to the 92G was about 20 years ago. A good friend of mine was working as a deputy in rural Oregon, and he carried a 92G with two spare magazines. This was at a time in my life when I thought the 9mm was good only for shooting rats and real men carried .45s. My friend explained to me his backup officers were often 45 minutes away, and having 45+1 rounds of 9mm ammunition on his person meant a potentially longer lifespan in a gunfight. Being older and wiser now, I see his wisdom.

His 92G had the smoothest working slide of any factory handgun I had ever felt. It seemed like there had to be oil-coated ball bear-



As a "G" model, the Brigadier Tactical is a decockeronly pistol. This solves the problem of shooters accidentally engaging the safety while racking the slide.



■ Built at Beretta with Wilson extras, the pistol features a skeletonized Elite II hammer and the Wilson Combat "WC" logo at the rear of the slide.

How Does Harbor Freight Sell GREAT QUALITY Tools at the LOWEST Prices?

We have invested millions of dollars in our own state-of-the-art quality test labs and millions more in our factories, so our tools will go toe-to-toe with the top professional brands. And we can sell them for a fraction of the price because we cut out the middle man and pass the savings on to you. It's just that simple! Come visit one of our 600 Stores Nationwide.

UPER COUPON

ER COUPO

WITH ANY PURCHASE

3-1/2" SUPER BRIGHT

NINE LED ALUMINUM

FLASHLIGHT LOT 69052 shown 69111/62522/62573

VALUE





US*GENERAL PM ", 5 DRAWER

REG. PRICE \$349.99

704 lb

Capacity

TOOL CART

LOT 95272 shown

9397/61427

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER **RESISTANT TARP** LOT 69249/69115/69137 69129/69121/877 shown REG. PRICE \$8.99







TRIPLE BALI Haul**!**Master RAILER HITCH LOT 61913 shown 69874/61914



HANDGUN SAFE/VAULT Bunker Hill Security® LOT 61581

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed

Over 25 Million Satisfied Customers

No Hassle Return Policy

• Lifetime Warranty On All Hand Tools

PITTSBURGH! RAPID PUMP® **3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK** LOT 69227/62116/62584 62590/68048 shown REG. PRICE \$159.99



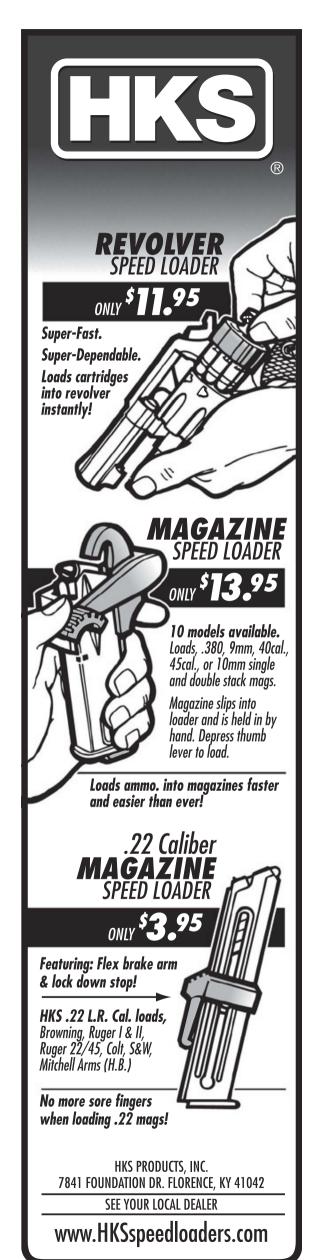


45 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT LOT 62443

REG. PRICE \$299.99



- 600 Stores Nationwide
- HarborFreight.com 800-423-2567



A TACTICAL 92

ings inside the gun as I racked the slide. The Wilson Combat Beretta has a smooth-working slide as well. This just seems to be one of the natural benefits of the design—no slick wonder coatings here. The pistol has the standard Beretta black Bruniton finish.

There are plenty of other upgrades on the Wilson Beretta. The dovetailed Trijicon front sight has a tritium insert with a white outline. The rear sight is a Wilson Combat design, a no-snag Battlesight model featuring a wide, U-shaped notch. The two together provide an excellent sight picture, but I would expect nothing less from people who made their bones shooting competitively.

The 4.7-inch barrel is stainless steel and has a target crown. The Bruniton finish has a slightly different hue depending on the metal it's applied to, so the aluminum frame is a tad lighter than the steel slide,



One of the big upgrades is the sights. The rear is Wilson's U-notch Battlesight, and the front sight features a tritium vial with a white outline.

but both are a little darker than the stainless steel barrel. I like the slight color variances, which I'm not sure you'll notice in the photographs. Another aesthetic touch is the Wilson Combat logo on the right rear of the slide.

The factory recoil spring guide rod has been replaced with a fluted stainless steel Wilson model. The frame sports a big tactical accessory rail, and as a result, overall weight of an empty gun is 36 ounces. The trigger guard is rounded (no hook), and the steel trigger is wide and smooth.

The front and back of the frame are checkered, which really improves grip on the gun. The factory grips have been replaced with Dirty Olive G10 laminate grips with the winged Wilson Combat "WC" logo medallion, held in place by hex-head grips screws. These grips feature aggressive texturing, and between them and the checkering on the frame, the pistol will not move in your hand. The two-tone green grips also look rather smart. In fact, as a whole this is perhaps the most attractive Beretta 92 I've ever seen.

The standard magazine release has been replaced with an enlarged, all-steel checkered model. In conjunction with that, the magazine well has been beveled to ensure smoother reloads.

While this pistol is perfectly suited for self-defense, Bill Wilson, one of the founders of IDPA, made sure that it is legal for IDPA Stock Service Pistol division as well as the USPSA's Production division. The extended magazine release does not extend farther from the frame than

ACCURACY RESULTS | BERETTA 92G BRIGADIER TACTICAL

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Wilson XTP	115	1,222	14	2.0
Hornady TAP/FPD	124	1,099	11	1.7
Black Hills JHP	124	1,155	12	1.6
Hornady XTP	147	977	9	1.4

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35 12 feet from the muzzle, Abbreviation; JHP jacketed hollowpoint

the grips, which prevents dropping the magazine accidentally while you're carrying it.

The pistol is supplied with three 15-round magazines—unless you live in a state with capacity restrictions, in which case the gun ships with zero magazines. The mags have a corrosion-resistant finish that's silver with a hint of tan, along with polymer followers and base pads. If 15 rounds isn't enough for you, 18- and 20-round magazines are available for the Beretta (Wilson Combat sells them), but shipping the gun with three better-than-standard magazines is a great added value.

I have to admit that I was shocked at the relatively low suggested retail price of the Wilson Combat Beretta 92G Brigadier. Wilson's 1911s start at \$2,500 and go up from there, so when I saw the new Beretta had a suggested retail of only \$1,195 I was surprised.

I learned this is because the gun is not custom made in-house at Wilson Combat but rather is an exclusive special edition produced at Beretta with some Wilson parts and then shipped to Wilson Combat once they're built. The other main difference between this Beretta and a typical custom pistol is the lack of a trigger job. Trigger jobs aren't free, so not doing one saves the consumer money up front.

The Wilson Combat Beretta uses a slightly lighter "D" hammer spring (which is the 16-pound hammer spring from the double-action-



■ The full frame rail accepts all accessories and adds a little weight out front, and the dehorned Wilson 92G slide is both functional and sexy.

Survival of the Sharpest

When it's you against nature, there's only one tool you need: the tempered steel Stag Hunter from Stauer—now ONLY \$79!

hat first crack of thunder sounded like a bomb just fell on Ramshorn Peak. Black clouds rolled in and the wind shook the trees. I had ventured off the trail on my own, gambled with the weather and now I was trapped in the forest. Miles from camp. Surrounded by wilderness and watching eyes. I knew that if I was going to make it through the night I needed to find shelter and build a fire... fast. As the first raindrops fell, I reached for my Stag Hunter Knife.

Forget about smartphones and GPS, because when it comes to taking on Mother Nature, there's only one tool you really need. Our stunning Stag Hunter is the ultimate sidekick for surviving and thriving in the great outdoors. Priced at \$149, the Stag Hunter can be yours today for an unbelievable \$79! Call now and we'll include a bonus leather sheath!

A legend in steel. The talented knifemakers of Trophy Stag Cutlery have done it again by crafting a fixed-blade beauty that's sharp in every sense of the word. The Stag Hunter sports an impressive 51/3" tempered German stainless steel blade with a genuine deer stag horn and stained Pakkawood™ handle, brass hand guard and polished pommel. You get the best in 21st-century construction with a classic look inspired by legendary American pioneers.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the craftsmanship. If you're not completely impressed, send it back within 60 days for a complete refund of your purchase price. But we believe that once you wrap your fingers around the Stag Hunter's handle, you'll be ready to carve your own niche into the wild frontier.

Stag Hunter Knife \$149*

Offer Code Price Only \$79 + S&P Save \$70

1-888-324-2091

Your Insider Offer Code: SHK160-01 You must use the insider offer code to get our special price.



Stauer®

14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. SHK160-01

Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com



*Discount is only for customers who use the offer code versus the listed original Stauer.com price.

- 5 1/3" fixed German stainless steel blade (9 3/4" total length)
- Stag horn and Pakkawood[™] handle
 Includes leather sheath



sheath!

Discovered: The Coin That Never Was!

America's Lost Masterpiece

The \$100 Union®



Original sketches found at the Smithsonian

Imagine that you were examining artifacts in the Smithsonian Institution and you found a never-seen-before sketch for the largest and highest denomination American coin ever proposed.

That's precisely what happened when a coin expert was exploring the collection at this celebrated public institution not long ago.

This is not a reproduction... this is the first-time ever Morgan \$100 Union design struck as a silver proof.

To his own surprise, the numismatist found the original-design concept for a one hundred dollar denomination created by George T. Morgan, arguably the greatest American coin designer. These sketches, hidden within an original sketchbook for nearly a century, represent perhaps the grandest American coin ever proposed—the \$100 Union®.

George T. Morgan will always be remembered for his most famous coin, the Morgan Silver Dollar. Until recently, the world knew nothing of Morgan's larger and higher denomination \$100 Union concept design. The secret's out!

For a limited time, you can secure the world's first and only \$100 Union Proof struck in pure .999 silver at our special price of only \$99 (plus s&h). Free shipping on orders over \$150. Call today!



1-800-806-1641

Offer code: MUS266-06
GovMint.com, 14101 Southcross Dr. W.,
Burnsville, MN 55337

Prices and availability subject to change without notice. Facts and figures deemed accurate as of September 2015. NOTE: GovMint.com® is a private distributor of worldwide government coin and currency issues and privately issued and licensed collectibles, and is not affiliated with the United States government. GovMint.com is not an investment company and does not offer financial advice or sell items as an investment. The collectible coin market is speculative, and coin values may rise or fall over time. This Product was minted privately and is not legal tender in the U.S. Free shipping offer valid for orders with product totaling more than \$150 before taxes. Valid for domestic standard delivery orders only. Please call for expedited or international shipping rates. Not valid on previous orders. All rights reserved. ©2015 GovMint.com.

A TACTICAL 92

— only 92D, as opposed to the standard 20-pound 92 hammer spring) and a skeletonized Elite hammer.

For all intents and purposes, it's a factory trigger pull, which means it's not great. Double-action pull on my sample was 11 pounds even, and it's not a short pull. After a smooth take-up, single action was a crisp 5.75 pounds. Because it's a pivoting trigger, it feels about a pound lighter than it is, but it's probably the heaviest trigger pull ever on a gun sporting the Wilson Combat logo.

One way to shorten the trigger pull is to start with the hammer at half-cock, which is really more like quarter-cock. It doesn't lower the weight but reduces the length of trigger pull by about 25 percent.

As the pistols ship from Wilson Combat, you can order one with Wilson Combat's trigger jobs or a magazine guide (a steel ramp that replaces the lanyard loop on the bottom of the pistol).

As Bill Wilson told me, "We can't do any more to the guns without getting into excise tax issues, and truthfully, they don't need anything else."

Folks, he ain't lying. I made Grand Master in USPSA shooting 9mms and have worked armed as a cop and a private investigator, so I know a few things about a properly set up gun for both competition and self-defense. Honestly, this Beretta is as close to perfection as you can get for this design for those purposes, with one exception: a proper trigger job.

While as-is the Wilson Combat Beretta is perfectly shootable, everyone performs better with a lighter trigger. A trigger job should get the double-action pull down to around nine pounds or lighter, and the single action down to four or below. The best thing about that is you can order a trigger job directly from Wilson Combat when you order the gun, which will run you only an additional \$110.

Regular readers of this magazine know I am a fan of full-size 9mm pis-

tols. This Beretta, with its fat frame rail and beefed-up slide, weighs as much as an all-steel 1911. The bore is higher off the hand than a Glock, but it's lower than a SIG. The end result is a soft-shooting piece that's a real pleasure to shoot.

Along with the test gun, I received a Wilson Combat Tactical Assault holster, and as someone whose daily carry holster is a Kydex outside-the-waistband holster, I can honestly say the Tactical Assault is the nicest OWB polymer holster on the market. The pebbled exterior looks so much like leather (including stitching around the edges) you'll have to touch it to determine it's Kydex, and the interior is lined with suede to protect your pistol.

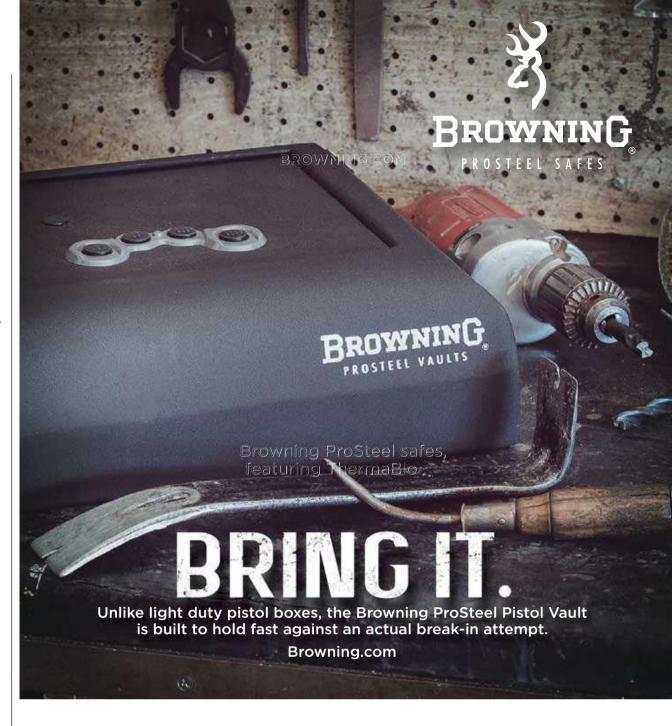
While the holster is approved for use in IDPA, as OWB holsters go it tucks the pistol in close to the body. I carried the Beretta for several weeks in the Wilson holster and really liked it.

Is this a concealable gun? Well, you're reading an article written by a guy who carries either a Glock 34 or SIG P226 in an outside-the-waist-band holster on a daily basis. Both those pistols are equivalent in size, if not weight, to the Beretta, and I can hide them no problem under a loose sweatshirt or Hawaiian shirt.

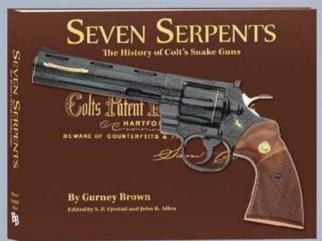
You will need a good holster and a good belt, and you'll definitely need to dress around the gun, if your daily life permits this. But it is doable. Just keep in mind the concealability of this and other pistols is your body type. All else being equal, tall or thin people can conceal guns better than short or fat ones.

Lately, I've been buying more of the guns I've been testing than I should, but I don't know how I can send this Beretta back to Wilson. A Wilson Combat limited-edition Beretta with specialized serial number, perhaps the pinnacle of the design, perfect for carry or competition?

No wonder the company is selling them faster than it can build them. •



NEW DEFINITIVE BOOK ON COLT'S SNAKE GUNS!



\$99.95 PLUS S/H!

- All Seven Serpents are represented and chapters include: Anaconda,
 Boa, Cobra, Diamondback, King Cobra, Python, and Viper.
- Information includes model histories, as well as detailed information and specifications on most variations.
- 344 pages with over 350 high-res digital color images (mostly life size)!
- Serialization charts and a thorough Index are also provided.
- Sample pages can be viewed by visiting BlueBookofGunValues.com

To order, please call 1-800-877-4867, ext. 3 or visit BlueBookofGunValues.com

HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT | BY JAMES TARR



WHILE COMPACT AND SUBCOMPACT

semiautos are getting the lion's share of love in the gun press these days, the snubnose revolver is still hugely popular as a concealed carry firearm. One of Ruger's most successful designs of the last 10 years has been its LCR (Lightweight Compact Revolver), and the newest version of the LCR is chambered in 9mm.

Ruger engineers stepped outside the box when designing the LCR, which debuted in 2009. The grip frame and trigger housing are made of polymer. Revolvers, especially compact ones, traditionally have very heavy triggers, but the trigger pulls on LCRs are known for being much more user-friendly—light and smooth. This was accomplished through the use of a friction-reducing cam in the trigger linkage.

This is a five-shot revolver with a 1.9-inch barrel and a black rubber Hogue Tamer Monogrip with a double finger groove. This grip is a little larger in every dimension than what you'll find on most

snubbies. The result is a pistol that is noticeably easier and more comfortable to shoot but not as easy to conceal. Overall the pistol is 4.5 inches tall, 6.5 inches long and 1.3 inches wide. The caliber is marked on the right side of the barrel lug.

While externally identical to the original .38 Special +P models, the 9mm version is just over 3.5 ounces heavier (17.2 ounces versus 13.5 ounces). This is because instead of an aluminum frame this version of the LCR (and the .357 Magnum version) features a blackened steel frame to handle the higher pressure of the cartridge. The stainless steel barrel is actually screwed into a sleeve that is all one piece with the frame.

The cylinder is stainless steel and coated with IonBond Diamondblack and has also been fluted to reduce weight. Like all modern Ruger revolvers, it features a push-button cylinder release.

The 9mm LCR is sold with three fullmoon clips and is intended to be used with them. For those of you who don't

RUGER LCR 9MM

TYPE: DAO revolver CALIBER: 9mm Luger CAPACITY: 5 BARREL: 1.88 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.5/4.5/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 17.2 oz. **FRAME:** polymer

CYLINDER: stainless steel w/IonBond

Diamondblack finish

GRIPS: Hogue Tamer Monogrip

SIGHTS: fixed rear notch; front serrated

ramp w/white inlay

TRIGGER: 9 lb. (as measured)

PRICE: \$619

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM

know what those are or why you'd need them, the 9mm Luger round, unlike the .38 Special, has no rim. The 9mm headspaces on the case mouth, so the cartridge won't fall through the cylinder, but extracting rimless cases from cylinders can be difficult unless you use half-or full-moon clips. The loaded clips drop in easily, and when it's time to reload the entire clip and five empty cases all extract at the same time.



HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT | RUGER LCR 9MM

Ruger refers to the rear sight as a U-notch, but it's actually squared-off at the bottom. It is a fixed sight integral to the frame. The front sight is a serrated ramp with a white rectangle made of white paint. Seen through the rear sight, the rectangle is a white square and helps

make the front sight pop in marginal light. While still non-adjustable and rather basic, the sights on the LCR are pretty darn good as snubbles go.

The trigger pull on my sample was smooth, with a non-stacking weight of nine pounds that felt lighter. Like every other LCR I've shot, it was possible to stage the trigger right before the break and shoot it almost like a single action. The trigger itself is steel with a smooth rounded face.

Revolvers, snubnose or not, are inherently accurate because the barrel is fixed to the frame. Lock them into a vise and many of them will do one-inch groups at 25 yards. Shooting a snubbie up to its accuracy potential, however, is almost impossible due to the long, heavy trigger, rudimentary grip and short sight radius. As a result, the practical accuracy of a snubbie (how accurately they can be shot by an actual human) is usually unimpressive.

Between its excellent trigger pull and comfortable grip, the LCR has the highest practical accuracy potential of just about any double-action-only snubbie I've ever tested. I was doing two-inch or better groups with every type of ammo off sandbags at 15 yards.

Because there is no reciprocating slide to absorb the energy, felt recoil of a 9mm revolver will be more than a semiauto pistol of the same weight. Recoil of even non +P loads was noticeable, but surprisingly, the sub-two-inch barrel of the LCR didn't really give anything up in velocity when compared to three-inch semiautos. I think this is because a semiauto's barrel length includes the chamber, and the distance between the end of the 9mm cartridge in the LCR's cylinder and the end of the barrel is right about 2.75 inches.

Some people might dismiss a revolver chambered in 9mm simply because of its non-traditional caliber, but in many ways I think a 9mm revolver is superior to an identical model in .38 Special. First, 9mm ammunition is ballistically superior to the .38 Special, and you also get ammo commonality between your revolver and semiauto. More importantly, using a full-moon clip you can reload your snubbie as fast as if you had a speedloader without having all the bulk in your pocket that a speedloader brings.



▲ The LCR is loaded via moon clips, and three are provided. It's a fast way to refill a revolver, and moon clips are less bulky to carry than speedloaders.



⚠ The LCR's trigger design makes this snubbie one of the easiest to shoot accurately. The pull on the author's sample was a non-stacking nine pounds.

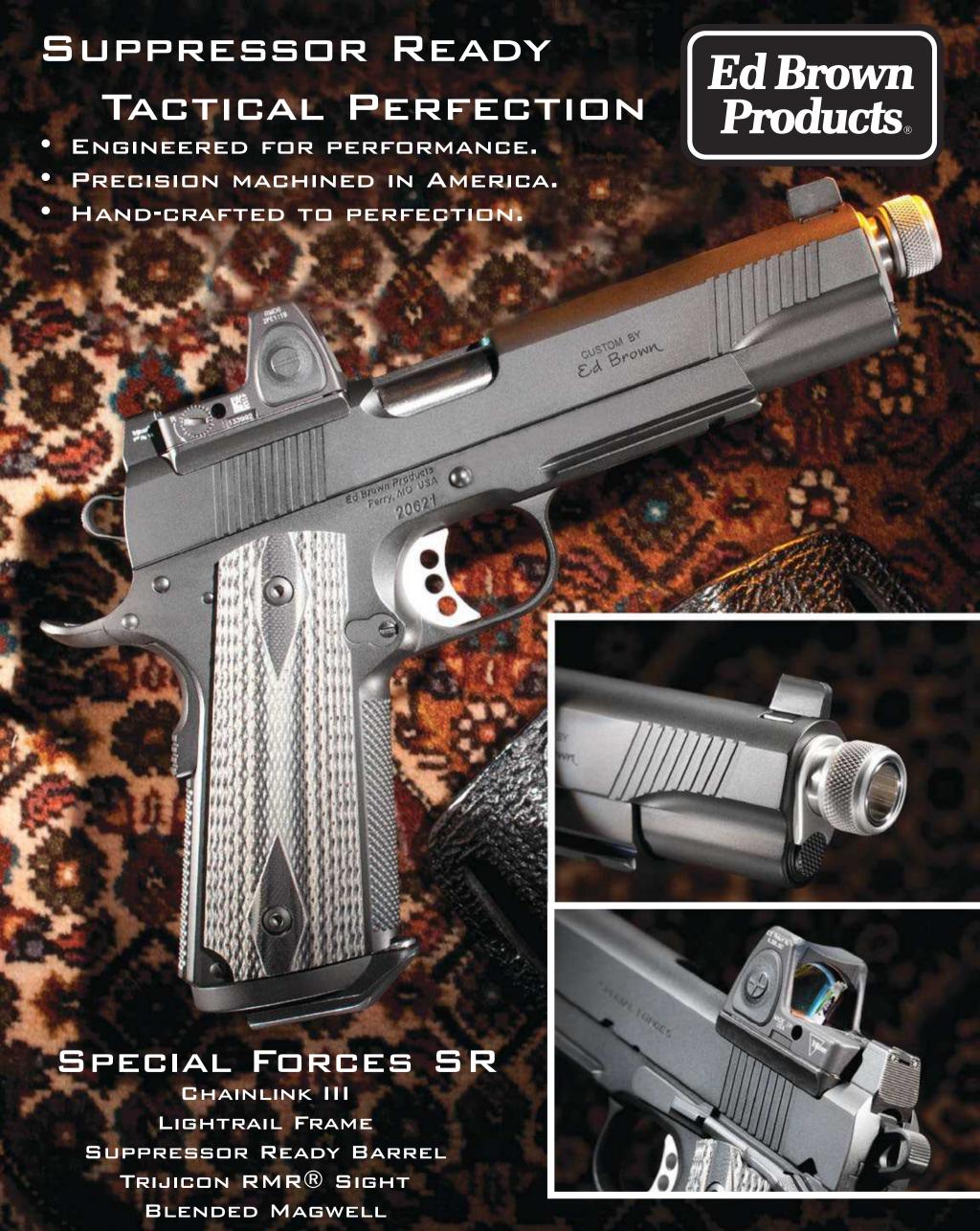


■ Unlike the .38 +P LCR, the 9mm version has a steel frame to withstand the round's higher pressures. This adds a little bit of weight.

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER LCR

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
SIG Elite FMJ	115	1,109	21	1.9
Black Hills JHP	124	1,111	12	1.6
Hornady XTP	124	1,004	15	2.0
Hornady XTP	147	912	18	1.9

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket



HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT | BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



SMITH & WESSON MODEL 69

WHEN THE .44 MAGNUM BROKE COVER

in 1955, it changed the way shooters thought about handguns, introducing a cartridge capable of taking big game at moderate ranges and one that would give a charging brown bear more than a headache. There was a problem, though. Housing six of those big .44 cartridges required a big action, which in turn required a big frame.

Big-frame .44s like the Ruger Redhawk and Smith & Wesson N frame were the standard for years, and while their added heft helped mitigate recoil, the added burden made the .44 a hulking sidearm. The options? Carry the extra weight or step down to a smaller cartridge.

In 2014, Smith & Wesson decided to put the .44 on a diet by building one on its medium-size L frame—creating a smaller, lighter, handier .44 that rode on the hip like a .357. The company named its new creation the Model 69. Indeed, it looks more like a duty revolver than a heavy .44 Magnum hunting gun. With its 4.25-inch barrel the gun has an overall length of 9.75 inches. Weight is just 37.2 ounces. By comparison, the S&W 986 in 9mm I tested last year wore a five-inch barrel

SMITH & WESSON

MODEL 69

TYPE: double-action/single-action revolver **CALIBER:** .44 Magnum/.44 Special

CAPACITY: 5
BARREL: 4.25 in.

OVERALL LENGTH: 9.75 in.

WEIGHT: 37.2 oz. **GRIPS:** black synthetic

FINISH: bead-blasted matte silver

SIGHTS: adjustable notch rear; blade front

w/red insert.

TRIGGER: SA, 4.4 lb.; DA, 11.2 lb. (measured)

PRICE: \$849

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson,

SMITH-WESSON.COM

and had a length of 10.5 inches and a weight of 34.9 ounces. The Model 69 is just one inch longer than a Government 1911 and weighs almost two ounces less.

Everything comes with a price, and the price of that trimming down is the loss of a chamber in the Model 69's cylinder. You get only five shots with this one, but you're dumping a lot of weight and size. The frame and cylinder are made from stainless steel, and they are treated with a bead-blasted matte silver finish. By contrast, the hammer, cylinder release and trigger are blued, and the hammer's spur length is somewhat shorter than, say, the spur on the Model 29, all part of the combat magnum look.

In keeping with Smith & Wesson's newer revolvers, the barrel is a two-piece design, with a rifled steel tube surrounded by a shroud. According to the company, this adds tension to improve accuracy. The notch-style rear sight has a white outline and is screw adjustable for windage and elevation, and the front blade sight has a red insert for added visibility.

The ball detent in the Model 69 rests on the front of the crane and secures to the one-piece underlug/barrel shroud. It's a secure lockup ensuring the L frame can indeed handle heavy .44 loads without loosening.

But can you handle heavy .44 loads in this light gun? Shaving those ounces could have turned the L frame Model 69 into an abusive monster, but Smith & Wesson built this gun with a secure, comfortable grip that helps keep it planted. Smith &Wesson calls it a "synthetic" grip, and it's molded to fit the hand and fingers while still having a thinner, more rounded design than many competing guns. It feels comfortable in the hand, and there's plenty of space for a two-fisted grip even if you have big hands. But it doesn't feel like a club.

Overall, the Model 69's fit is excel-

lent, from the cylinder/forcing cone matchup to the crane's flush fit with the frame. The cylinder ratchets are well machined and smooth, and the counterclockwise rotation of the cylinder is equally smooth. In single-action mode the trigger breaks cleanly at 4.4 pounds. In double action mode it's about 11.2 pounds, but it's a smooth pull without the rough stacking that you'll find on some other wheelguns.

And, most importantly, it's shootable. All .44s are a handful, but some of the small ones are painful to shoot. The Model 69 isn't that bad, though. I had misgivings about the relatively thin rear of the grip and what it might do to my hand, but I needn't have worried.

The barrel length seems to be just about right—long enough to be accurate and keep the .44's prodigious muzzle blast away from your face, yet short enough to be light and wieldy. The short hammer spur means you can get the gun recocked quickly and with efficiency of motion, and the tough, corrosion-resistant finish is the kind you'll want when you're carrying a gun in wet environs for weeks at a time.

Okay, I said the recoil isn't so bad, and that's true. However, in total I put more than 100 rounds through the gun during testing, including some heavy loads, and that was more than enough. With .44 Special rounds, though, this gun would be quite manageable, making it an excellent self-defense gun for two-legged predators at home or on the trail.



■ By taking the .44 Magnum into the smaller L frame, Smith & Wesson has created a .44 that carries more like a 357



▲ S&W's two-piece barrel design features a rifled steel tube housed in a metal shroud, in this case one with a partial barrel underlug.



 The synthetic grips offer a firm, comfortable hold, and it's narrow enough to be comfortable yet doesn't bite the hand during recoil.

ACCURACY RESULTS | SMITH & WESSON MODEL 69

.44 Magnum	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady XTP	240	1,228	13.1	1.78
Winchester JSP	240	1,005	10.9	2.19
American Eagle JSP	240	1,015	14.4	2.23
Remington UMC Lead	240	908	19.2	2.56
Hornady XTP	300	1,028	10.4	1.91

Notes: Accuracy results are average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocites are 10-shot averages recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: JSP, jacketed softpoint

SEE THE LIGHT

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS, A FLASHLIGHT IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.

CRIMINALS PREFER THE NIGHT SHIFT,

where the cover of darkness helps to conceal their evil deeds. The FBI's Law Enforcement Officer's Killed and Assaulted report reveals that more officers are feloniously killed in hours of darkness than during daylight, yet most cops receive little training in low-light shooting.

Defensive handgunners often receive even less training in low-light tactics. When you consider how often you are in a dimly lit environment (your home, a movie theatre, out at night, etc.), the need for flashlight training is obvious.

Recently, while instructing a group of police officers in low-light shooting, I was alarmed by their apparent lack of knowledge and skill in this critical area.

What's worse is many of these officers work primarily night shift. Clearly, if these officers were involved in a line-of-duty shooting, it would be in the dark. So why do officers typically receive only rudimentary training in low-light shooting? For the same reason many civilian shooters receive zero training in low-light tactics: It's inconvenient.

If you carry a gun or keep one in your home to protect yourself and your family, you must be prepared to use light in conjunction with your gun. Whether it's to identify a threat, acquire your target or disrupt your adversary's vision, employing your flashlight effectively can make all the difference.

Before you press the trigger, you better be sure that the person on the other end of your muzzle poses a deadly threat. In a home-defense scenario, light will help you determine whether the "intruder" is actually a family member, a roommate or a friend paying an unexpected visit. In addition, light can help you differentiate between a cell phone and a gun in the hand of whomever you're dealing with in a darkened environment. Without a light, this high stress, split-second decision must be made with sparse information.

There's a big difference between having a light and knowing how to use light properly. When shining robbed of virtually all vision for at least a couple of seconds. This would have given the officer time to move from where I had last seen him and also time to decide on how best to handle me based on the particular object I was holding in my hand.

I sensed some of the officers underestimated the blinding effect a white light could have on them in darkness, so I decided to turn the tables on them using a flashlight on strobe mode, which can have an even more disorienting effect.

The darker the room and brighter the light, the more blinding effect this tactic can have.

your light to determine if someone poses a threat, rather than focus the beam on his torso, direct the light onto his face. With the beam focused on the face of your potential adversary, his hands and waist (where he's most likely to have a weapon) will still be illuminated, but you will have the added benefits of disrupting his vision. The darker the room and brighter the light, the more blinding effect this tactic can have.

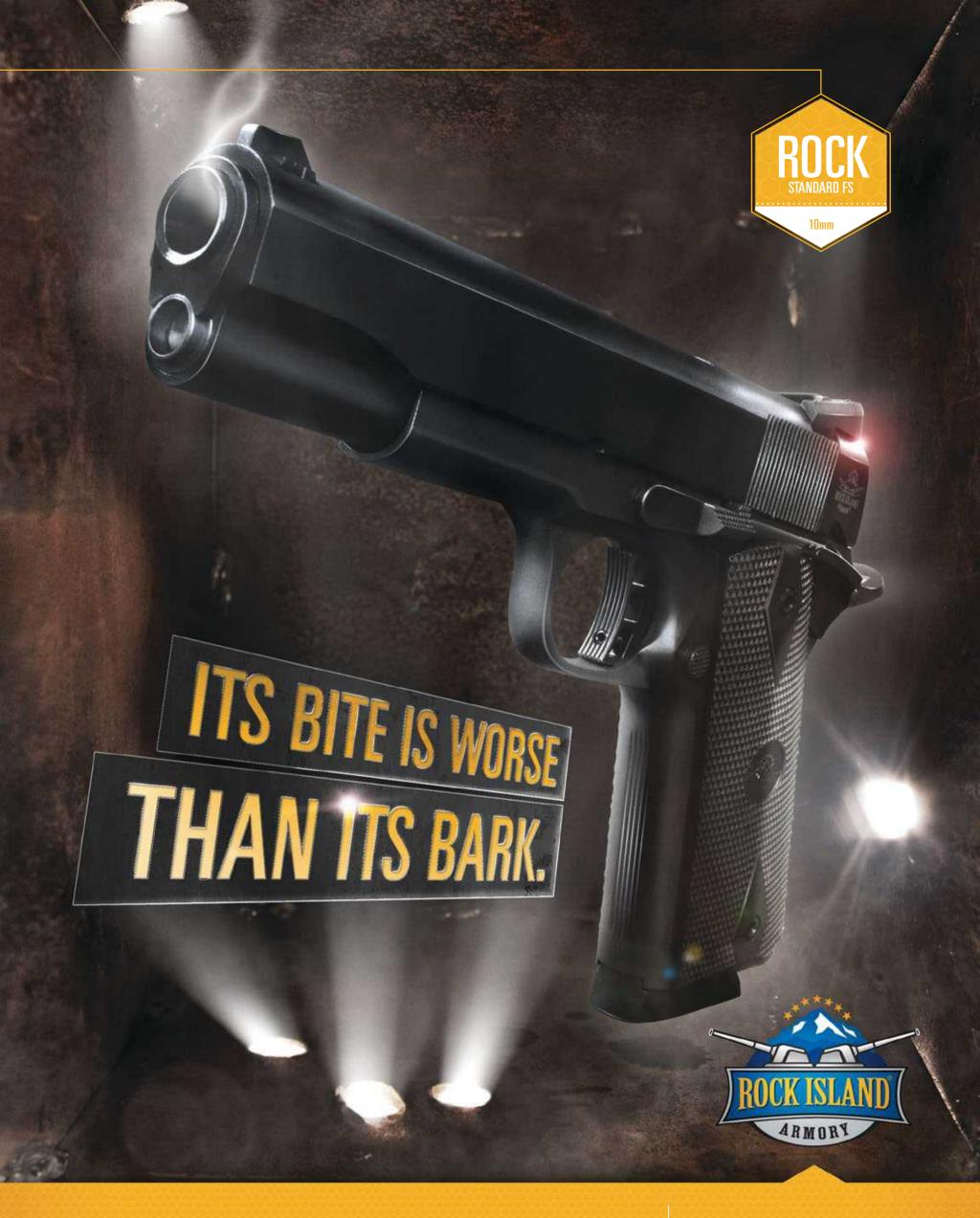
To make this point to the police officers I was training, I stood in a shadowy area and held various objects—a set of keys, a knife, a cell phone and a firearm—with the officers about 30 feet away. I had them shine a light in my face, and they were able to identify with 100 percent accuracy the item I held in my hand.

Meanwhile, I was immediately

With the lights out on the range and safety officers in place, I shone my light directly into each officer's eyes and then stepped behind the line and had them draw and fire at a target five yards downrange. Some of the officers hit the target; others did not. All the officers became believers in the power of light.

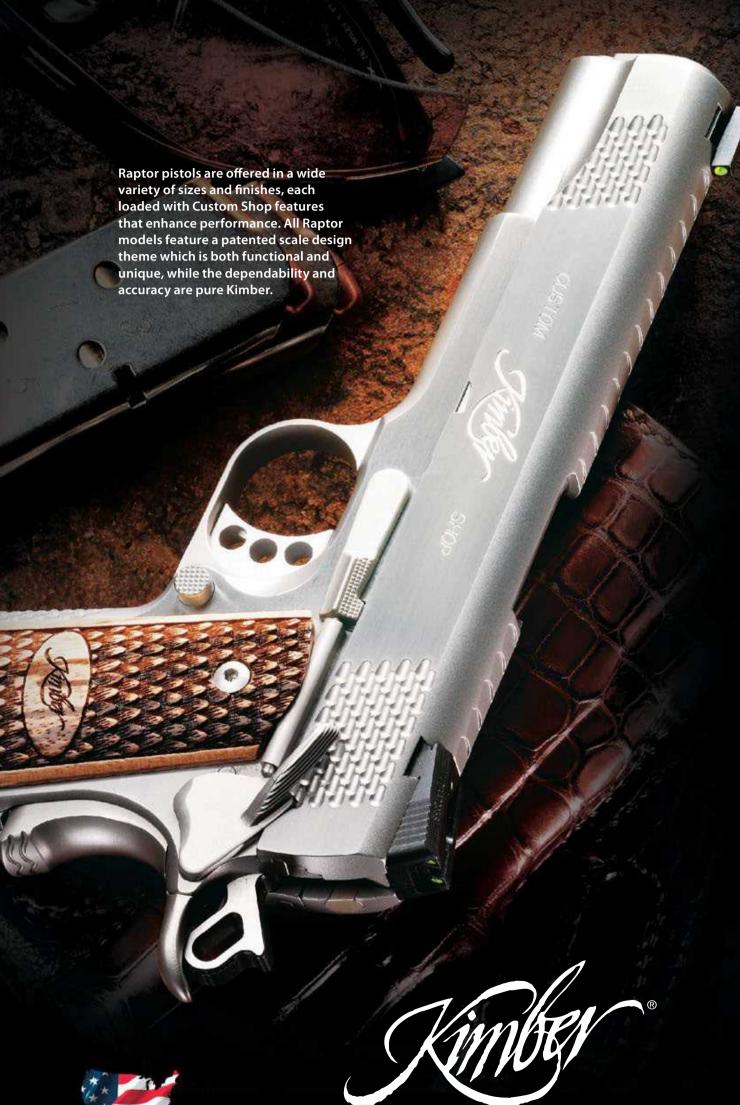
Faced with a deadly threat in a low-light environment, having a light and being proficient in its use is as important as having a firearm. Low-light tactics are an entire field of study, so while you may not have hours to devote to perfecting your skills, you simply can't afford not to train.

With a little practice, there's no need to be afraid of the dark. In fact, your goal should be to make those who hide in the veil of darkness afraid of you.



KIMBER RAPTOR PISTOLS.

UNEQUALLED QUALITY. UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE.



MADE IN AMERICA



Custom Shop features include an ambidextrous thumb safety, scaled slide serrations and Tactical Wedge night sights.



All Raptor pistols have a flat top slide with a back-cut feathered row of scales running the full length. Made in the Kimber Custom Shop, they also incorporate standard features like a match grade barrel, chamber and trigger.



Both black and stainless 1911 Raptor models are available in three sizes.

KIMBERAMERICA.COM

